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THE CAVE MAN



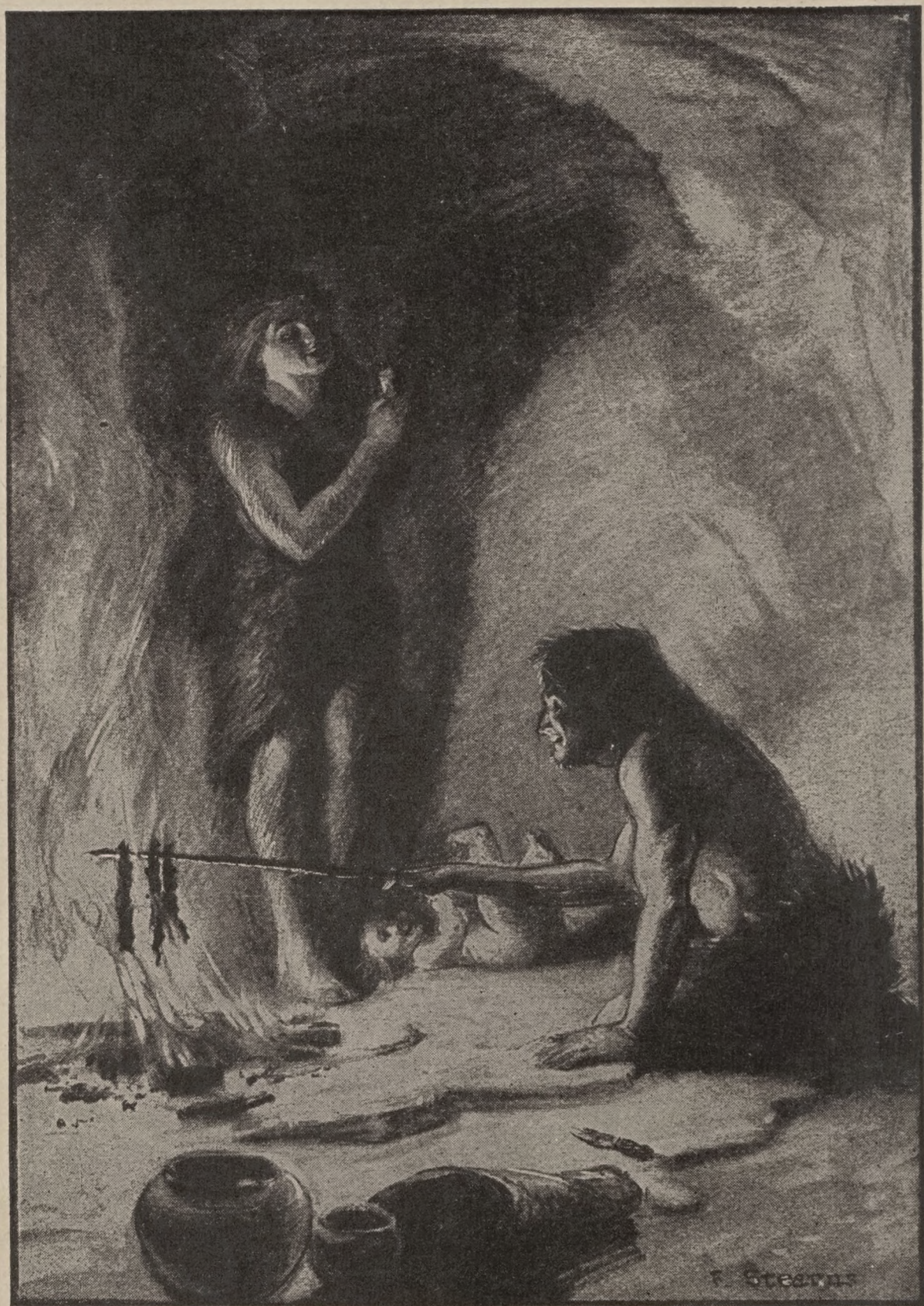


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"HE HELD THE STRIPS OF MEAT OVER THE LIVE COALS"

AB, THE CAVE MAN

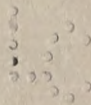
A STORY OF THE
TIME OF THE STONE AGE

ADAPTED FOR
YOUNG READERS FROM THE STORY OF AB

BY

WILLIAM LEWIS NIDA

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS—RIVER FOREST, ILL.

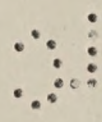


Illustrated by
FRED STEARNS

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PREFACE

For nearly a dozen years it has been my pleasure to observe the intense interest shown by second grade pupils as they listened to the "Story of Ab" from the lips of their teachers. No other book available has held our children so completely in its spell. Teachers in other schools reporting the same lively enthusiasm for the story among their pupils, it seemed an injustice to childhood not to make an effort to put "Ab" within the reach of every child.

By special arrangements with Messrs. Doubleday, Page & Co. and Mr. Waterloo, the author of "Ab", the work is now ready for the little folks. I have followed Mr. Waterloo's book closely save two chapters which are my own.

My gratitude is due Miss Mabel Pumphrey and Miss Florence Gardiner of Oak Park, who were kind enough to read much of the manuscript, to

test the pages in their schools and to offer valuable suggestions. I am especially indebted to Miss Emma Schulz of the River Forest schools, who read critically the entire manuscript, and whose wide experience with children and excellent judgment were especially helpful.

WILLIAM LEWIS NIDA.

River Forest, Illinois.

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AB, THE CAVE MAN

CHAPTER I

THE BABE IN THE WOODS

In the midst of a deep, dark forest lay a little brown babe.

His bed was a pile of drifted beech leaves.

He rolled about among the leaves and kicked up his short legs with glee.

He was all alone in the forest, but he was happy.

With his strong little hands, he was breaking the twigs about him with delight, for they were the only playthings he had.

Laughing and cooing he kicked about in

the beech leaves and looked up at the blue sky.

A queer looking little fellow was this babe.

He was as brown as an autumn nut, sturdy and rugged.

The hair on his head was very long.

Even his little arms and legs were covered with down.

He needed no other clothing to keep him warm.

This baby's name was Ab.

After awhile Ab became tired of breaking twigs.

So he curled up among the beech leaves and went to sleep.

He slept peacefully for a time; then, suddenly, he awoke and began to cry.

Ab's mother heard his cry and came running from the river bank toward him.

Was he hungry, or was he frightened by the howling of hungry wolves?

She knew that many dangerous animals roamed about the forest searching for food.

She feared it might be a great cave tiger, a cave bear or a hyena.

She knew that some animals howl and snarl when they scent food.

Were their keen-scented noses searching for little Ab?

“I hope I can reach him first,” said she, and she ran as fast as she could.

“Oh, if I can only get him to the cave!”

Ab’s parents lived in a cave.

Everybody then lived in caves.

We call the people of those days cave men.

They had tools and weapons made only of stone, or the bones of animals.

They had a hard time making weapons of stone, that would keep off dangerous animals.

Long before Ab was born, the people lived in trees to keep the big beasts from eating them.

Ab's great forefather, Strong-Arm, was a tree-dweller, but he learned how to use fire.

How glad he was when he found that all the wild beasts were afraid of fire!

After that he could fight them and drive them away with it.

One day Strong-Arm found a fine cave in which a big cave bear lived, but the bear was not at home.

He said, "This is a warmer home than the treetops. I'll block up the door and build a fire and keep the bears away."

And so he did.

Other tree-dwellers saw his snug cave home.

They wanted one, too.

So they drove the animals out with fire,

and soon nearly all the tree-dwellers were living in caves.

But still there were a few who liked the treetops better.

Some said they liked better to sleep under the stars.

Others wanted always to be awake to welcome the sun-god each morning. ✓

But after a time there came a very, very cold winter; and every tree-dweller was glad to give up his home in the oak for a snug, warm cave.

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CHAPTER II

RED-SPOT SAVES HER BABE

The name of Ab's mother was Red-Spot.

Her only clothing was a dress made of wolverine skins neatly sewed together with sinew.

It hung from her left shoulder by a strip of skin and reached from the waist almost to the knees.

It was drawn loosely about the waist and tied with a bow knot.

Red-Spot's hair was very long and hung down between her brown shoulders.

It had never been combed, but it was thrown back from her face.

It was knotted and tangled to keep it away from her sharp eyes.

Red-Spot wore neither hat nor shoes, for the cave people would not be troubled with such things.

This brown woman had beautiful feet.

She could pick up objects with her toes almost as well as we can with our fingers.

As Red-Spot came running swiftly toward her babe, he yelled louder than ever.

She leaped lightly over streams and huge tree-trunks, for she was a strong and active woman.

She made a dive into the little hollow and picked the babe from its nest of leaves.

She tossed him up lightly, and he stopped crying.

While Red-Spot was holding Ab in her arms, she heard a sound, which made her leap quickly upon a little bank near by.

Here she looked sharply about and listened.

Then you should have seen her!

Just above her head swung down one of the branches of a great beech tree.

The mother threw Ab into the hollow of her left arm.

Then she leaped upward and caught the branch with her right hand.

So she hung dangling.

Then she quickly seized Ab by one arm with her left hand and lowered him between her legs and clasped them about him closely.

Ah! if you could have seen her climb that tree!

With both her strong arms free, Red-Spot climbed up the stout beech limb hand over hand.

Soon she was twenty feet above the ground.

There she sat down on a branch with one arm around a big limb.

The other arm held the brown babe close to her breast.



"HE LEAPED UPWARD WITH A FIERCE GROWL, BUT
RED-SPOT ONLY LAUGHED"

No sooner had Red-Spot reached her safe perch than there came rushing toward the tree a fierce wild beast.

Its hoggish nose was trying to find little Ab.

Its sharp fangs were ready to eat him.

It looked like a huge wolf, but it was spotted and striped.

It was one of the monster hyenas of those days.

Next to the cave tiger and the cave bear, the cave men feared it most.

The hyena's loud snarling, as it hunted for Ab, must have wakened him and set him crying.

The beast ran to the tree and scented the mother and child above him.

He leaped upward with a fierce growl, but Red-Spot only laughed aloud.

She even poked one bare foot down at

the leaping beast and waved her leg to tease him, for she knew she was safe.

After awhile she grew hungry, but the ugly beast would not go away.

So Red-Spot sent out through the forest a strange call, which could be heard a great way off.

The call was answered at once, and as Red-Spot repeated the cry, the answering voice came nearer and nearer.

Soon there came a brown man swinging easily from branch to branch along the treetops.

It was One-Ear, Ab's father.

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CHAPTER III

ONE-EAR AND THE HYENA

One-Ear, the father of Ab, looked very much like Red-Spot, only stronger.

He had a deeper chest, a heavier jaw and a sterner voice.

He was dressed almost as she was.

In his belt was a fearful weapon, so heavy that none but a strong man could have carried it among the treetops.

It was a big stone ax, with a handle almost three feet long.

The ax was made fast to the handle through a split in the tough wood.

It was held firm by many knots of sinew.

When One-Ear swung into the beech

tree, he sat on a limb and listened to what Red-Spot had to tell him.

Then he climbed high up in the tree and broke off a dead limb about two yards long.

With this heavy club he climbed down again below Red-Spot and Ab.

He came so near the ground that the leaping beast could almost reach him.

As the hyena leaped upward in its rage, this huge club came crushing against its thick skull.

The beast was stunned by the strong blow and fell backward upon the ground.

Then the cave man dropped to the ground lightly as a monkey.

The huge stone ax went crushing into the brain of the quivering brute, and there he lay dead.

Red-Spot leaped down with baby Ab, and all went chattering toward their cave.

As they went, they kept a sharp watch for enemies.

Cave men could see farther than we can.

They could hear better, too, and they had a keener sense of smell.

On the way Red-Spot left the path to pick up a great leaf full of berries, which she had gathered while Ab was lying asleep.

Soon they came to the cave. ✓

They crept between the piles of stone, which made the doorway, and stood straight up in the big cave.

It was almost as large as a school-room and nearly as high.

The floor was twenty feet square, and the walls were fifteen feet high.

There was a hole in the top for smoke to go out.

They had dug it downward from the land above by hard work.

Just under the opening there was a fireplace on the floor of the cave, for the cave men came to know more and more about the use of fire.

They even knew how to get rid of smoke.

On the hearth were glowing coals of the hardest wood.

The cave people had neither flint nor matches, and their way of starting a fire was a hard one.

Then how careful they must be to keep it burning!

They put on the hardest wood when they left their caves, so they would be sure to find a bed of coals when they came back.

Red-Spot threw some twigs and dry, dead limbs on the live coals.

Soon there was a roaring flame.

This lighted up the cave, and One-Ear pointed proudly to the food he had brought.

It was meat of the finest sort and enough to last the family a whole week, if they could keep it from spoiling.

It was a hind quarter of a wild horse.

“A feast! a feast!” cried Red-Spot with delight.

Not for many months had this cave family tasted wild horse.

This little animal was a wary beast and very hard to trap or kill.

It was a very fleet runner, too.

This had surely been One-Ear's lucky day.

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How

CHAPTER IV IN THE CAVE HOME

How pleasant to be safe in their cave home again!

And how hungry they all were!

Red-Spot put Ab on the floor and began to prepare their dinner.

She tossed the nuts among the ashes and live coals to roast.

One-Ear cut strips of meat from the wild horse with a flint knife.

Then with a sharp-pointed stick two yards long, he held the strips of meat over the live coals.

The cave was filled with the sound of crackling nuts and the fragrant odor of the broiling meat.

While they were busy about their meal,

One-Ear told how he had killed the wild horse.

He had seen a herd of these little horses feeding near a great cliff.

So he climbed to the top of the cliff, which was higher than the tallest oak tree, and waited till the herd came close beneath him.

Then he rolled a huge rock over the edge of the cliff and watched to see what would happen.

It went crashing down among the frightened herd, and one of the horses was killed.

He clapped his hands and shouted for joy, as he hurried down the cliff to take home a choice piece of meat from the horse.

So this was to be a holiday feast in the cave home!

And it was a feast — savory meat, roasted nuts and fresh berries.

Little Ab had his share too, as he rolled

and crowed and cooed on the stone floor of the cave.

The little family were very happy.

They knew not when they might have another such feast.

So they ate their fill, for what was left would soon spoil.

When the meal was ended, they all lay down upon a mass of brush and skins, which was their bed.

Baby Ab was soon cuddled close in his mother's arms.

In a short time the cave family were fast asleep.

They slept peacefully. They knew their stone doorway would keep them safe from the animals moving about outside.

None but lank wolves or wild-cats could get through.

And there was something better than stones to keep them away.

The all-night fire of knots and hardwood smoked, flamed and flickered near the entrance.

All was quiet within the cave.

But outside the great-clawed and sharp-toothed beasts fought and howled and searched for their prey.

They were glad that this queer thing—man—was out of their way.

He might trouble them during the day, but the night was theirs.

CHAPTER V

AB AND HIS NEW PLAYMATE

Baby Ab grew fast.

He learned to stand up and run about more quickly than babies do nowadays.

He seldom cried.

Cave children cried very little unless they were hungry.

Ab had no school such as yours to attend every day.

His school was the great forest all about him.

He learned from Mother Nature with ears and eyes wide open.

He learned to obey his stern father, too.

Ab thought it hard to mind his parents; so, one day his father told him a story.

One-Ear pointed to his own head where only one ear could be seen.

Then he told Ab that, when he was a boy, he did not mind his mother very well.

One day he ran off into the woods.

A fierce wild-cat had snatched off one of his ears before his father could get to him.

That is why he was called One-Ear.

Do you not think Ab obeyed better after hearing this story?

When he was naughty One-Ear used a stinging beech twig.

But this seemed good for Ab, for he had grown very fast.

Have you wondered how Ab got his name?

When he was beginning to talk, all he could say was, "Ab."

And so his parents named him Ab.

He had heard of another boy, who lived not many miles away in the same forest.

His name was Oak.

He was called so because near the cave where he was born stood a great oak tree.

Sometimes Oak's parents wished to leave him in a safe place while they went to hunt food.

So they often tied him in a rude cradle, which dangled from a branch of the great friendly oak.

"Why not name the baby after his mother oak tree?" said Stripe-Face.

And so they did.

In a few years Ab had grown to be a fine, husky lad.

He could climb trees like a young monkey.

One day he climbed to the very top of a great oak tree near the cave.

Here he found a fine seat on a crooked limb.

He was teetering upon the limb, when

his sharp eyes saw something in another tree far up the river.

He watched the object for a long time.

It was teetering, too.

Could it be Oak swinging in that far-off tree?

How he wished he knew!

He had never wandered a mile from home alone because there was danger everywhere.

But Ab decided to take a trip this warm afternoon.

Off he went, swinging himself from tree to tree like a squirrel.

He passed along many treetops.

Once in awhile he found the trees too far apart.

Then he slid cautiously down the tree.

After looking in every direction, he made a dash across the open and was up another tree in the winking of an eye.

Then he swung himself from tree to tree again.

Suddenly his sharp ears caught the sound of rustling leaves just ahead of him.

Oh, how quickly he slipped behind the trunk of the tree!

He stood very still for a long time, peeping about in every direction to see what had frightened him.

At last he saw a brown head peeping from behind another tree not forty yards away.

It was another boy!

How he had wished for a playmate!

Maybe this boy would be one!

After a time they both came into view and sat looking at each other.

Their brown legs were dangling from the limbs on which they sat.

Each waited for the other to speak first, just as strange boys do to-day.

Finally Ab said, "Who are you?"

"I am Oak," replied the strange boy,
"Who are you?"

"Oh, I am Ab."

"Where do you come from?" asked Oak.

"From the cave by the beeches. Where
do you come from?" asked Ab.

"From the cave near the turn of the
river where that large oak tree is," said
Oak. "I am not afraid of you."

"I am not afraid of you either," said Ab.

"Let us climb down and get on that big
rock and throw stones into the water,"
said Oak.

"All right," said Ab.

Soon the two boys were together on a
high, safe rock. Ab was having the first
good time of his life with a playmate.

CHAPTER VI

AB AND OAK PLAN A GREAT HUNT

Ab and Oak had great sport that afternoon.

They became such good friends that Ab asked Oak to go home with him.

Oak had never been allowed to go so far from his cave home.

But he and Ab had such good fun together that he said he would go.

Off they ran along the forest paths toward Ab's home.

But they kept a keen lookout for dangerous beasts.

Ab's father and mother liked Oak very much.

One-Ear knew well Oak's father, Stripe-Face, and they were good friends.

He was called Stripe-Face because, when he was a stout lad, he once came suddenly upon a powerful cave bear.

Stripe-Face fought fiercely for his life.

The bear had him in a corner.

With his great claws, the bear made a sweep at the lad's head.

The sharp claws plowed furrows down one cheek, but the boy dodged just in time to save himself and get away.

He got well, after a time, but the bear's claws left red scars on his cheek.

So he was called Stripe-Face.

Ab and Oak visited each other very often after their first afternoon together.

“Are we not strong enough now to hunt as our fathers do?” said Ab one day.

So they made great plans for their first hunt!

Nothing would do but they must kill some big animal.

They decided to go alone and kill a wild horse.

Herds of these little horses fed along the river valley.

They made good food for man as well as for wild beasts when they could be captured.

The skin of the horse was not good for much.

It would not make a warm cloak, because the hair was so short.

But it made fine strings and thongs.

It was not so easy to kill a wild horse as it might seem.

The horse knew that man was its enemy.

It could scent a man a long way off, and it could run swiftly.

It always went in herds keeping a safe

distance from places where a man or beast might hide.

It was so much easier to decide what to do with the skin and the meat, than to plan how to capture the animal.

Something was wrong with nearly every plan they made.

Should they hide on a cliff and roll a stone into a herd?

This would have been easy.

But the horses had learned that it was dangerous for them to go near a cliff.

Every time they did, some were killed and all were frightened.

So they were seldom seen near one.

The boys might have to wait a long time to kill one in this way, and they did not want to wait.

A better plan was to hide in the tall grass and try to kill one with a club.

But dangerous beasts often lurked in the tall grass, too.

Besides, it was not safe for the cave man to go far from the edge of the forest.

But the wild horse would not come near the forest.

“Oh, let us plan to kill some other animal,” said Oak.

“No, indeed,” said Ab. “It must be a horse. We need the meat for food and the skin for strings.”

“Why not make a deadfall?” shouted Oak eagerly.

“Who ever saw a deadfall big enough to kill a horse?” replied Ab.

“We would need a big tree for that, and we could not drag a tree to the right place.”

“We might find a fallen tree somewhere which we could prop up,” said Oak.

“A horse would not go near it,” said

Ab, “and if it did, how could it knock the prop away?”

There was a clump of trees upon the plain not more than two minutes’ dash from the edge of the forest.

Near this tree-clump, they had often seen horses feeding.

“I know a good plan,” said Ab.

“Let us make a home in those trees and dig a pitfall close by.”

How big should they make it?

Ab thought the pit should be about four steps long, three steps wide and as deep as the tallest cave man.

They would cover the pit with brush and turf and see what a few nights would bring.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAVE BOYS AT WORK

How delighted they were over this new plan!

They talked about it all day.

At night they dreamed about it, too.

It seemed more like play than work.

But how could they dig the big pit when they had no tools?

They would need something with which to loosen the dirt and scoop it out.

Along the river were great clam-shells.

There were clam-shells in the caves, too, for the cave people often used clams for food.

These big shells had sharp edges, and Ab said they would make fine scoops.

With these sharp shells they could cut the turf, too.

So the brave boys set out one day for the edge of the forest, nearest to the clump of trees in the plain below.

They planned to keep a careful watch till the safe hours of the day.

Then they would make a dash to the tree-clump.

So, just before mid-day, they swung down together to a low sweeping branch.

With anxious eyes they looked over every yard of long grass in the valley below.

They could see a small herd of wild horses feeding in the distance.

Farther away above the deep grass, they saw what might be the antlers of a great elk.

But, between them and the tree-clump, the grass did not move.

They could see no trace of any lurking beast.

“Are you afraid?” asked Ab.

“Not if we run together,” said Oak.

“All right,” said Ab, “let’s go it with a rush.”

The slim, brown boys dropped lightly to the ground.

Each one held a clam-shell.

Side by side they darted down the slope.

Across, through the deep grass they ran, until they came to the clump of trees.

Up the largest tree they scrambled like two young apes.

The tree up which they had climbed was a huge pine.

Its lowest branch was thirty feet from the ground.

Here they felt safe from the greatest leap of any beast.

In a half hour they twined several branches together and made a solid nest and lookout.

In this nest they curled themselves down.

After much chuckling talk, they made their plans.

Only one boy should dig at a time.

The other must remain in the nest and keep watch.

They decided to begin work at once, but just where should they dig the pit?

About a hundred feet from the tree was a spot where the grass was high.

Still, it looked as though horses had been feeding there.

Perhaps they would come again.

The boys did not like to work so far from the trees.

But they thought it best to put the trap in the right place.

Here they stood a better chance of catching a wild horse.

So here the pit was to be dug.

Now each lad wished to dig first, and they had warm words.

“I will go and dig, and you shall keep watch,” said Oak.

“No, I’ll dig, and you shall watch,” replied Ab. “I can run faster than you.”

At last it was settled that Ab should dig first, and Oak should watch.

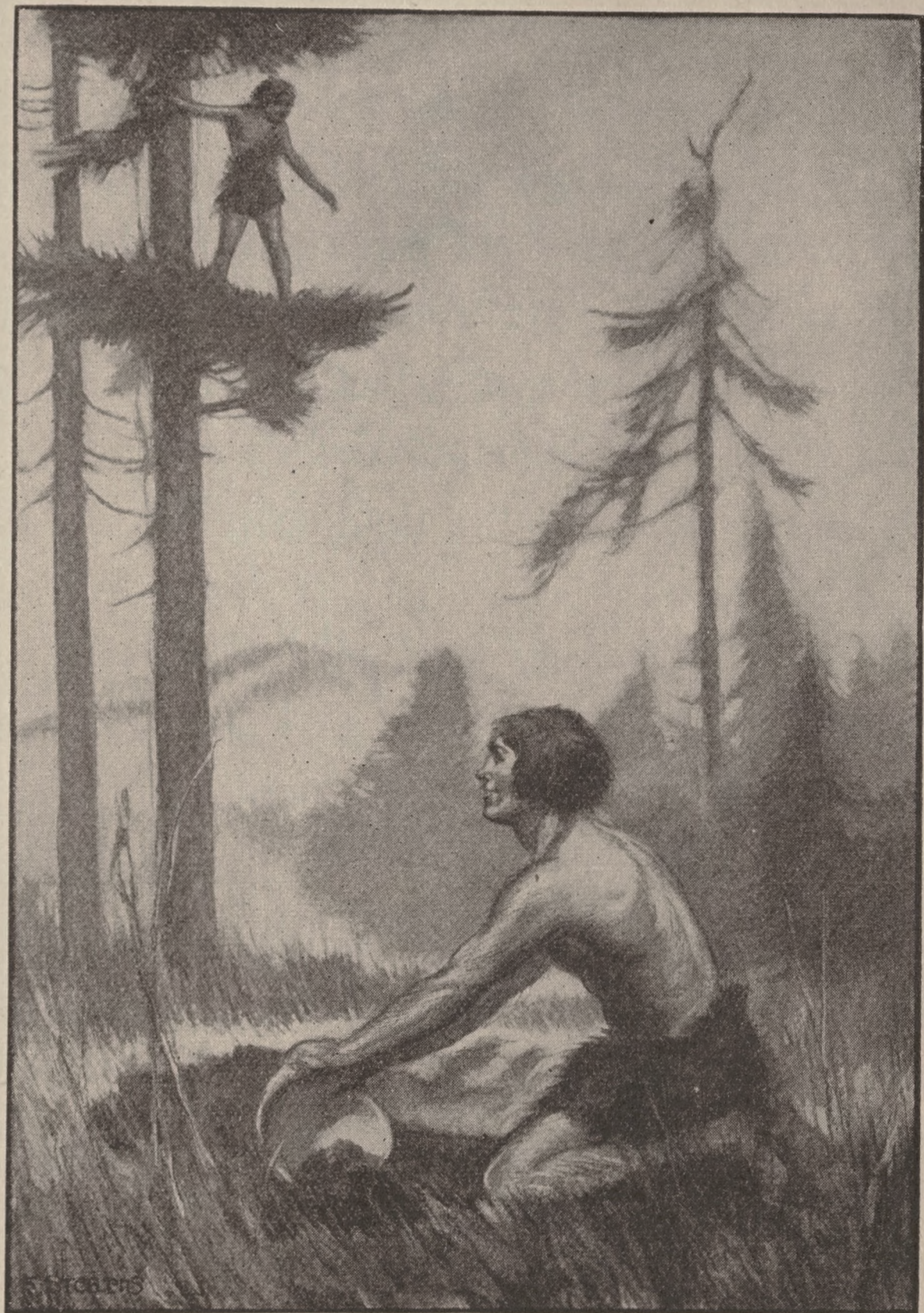
Ab slid down the tree with his clam-shell in his hand.

He ran to the spot and began to dig.

Ab found it difficult to cut through the tough grass roots.

But he kept at work.

“When I once get through the turf it will be easier,” shouted Ab to Oak.



"OAK SHOUTED TO AB TO CHEER HIM ON"

He marked the boundary of the pit and began chopping out sods.

Meantime, Oak, with his keen eyes, was peering in every direction.

And all the time he was thinking that they were no longer boys but men, for were they not doing men's work?

“How proud our parents will be when we have really trapped a wild horse!” thought Oak.

“How surprised all the cave men will be!” he said to himself; “and how jealous the other cave boys will be to hear Ab and Oak praised!”

He laughed, he clapped his hands, he shook the tree, he shouted to Ab to cheer him on.

It was a great moment for the young cave boys.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MONSTER SEA-SERPENT

Ab cut up the turf into sods.

But what should he do with them?

Oak suddenly called out, "Don't put the sods and dirt in a pile where the animals can see it."

Ab thought a minute.

"I know what we can do," he said. "We must carry the sods and dirt to the bank over there and throw them into the marsh."

"That is just the thing to do," said Oak.

Below the sod Ab found black dirt and easy digging.

Shellful after shellful he carried from the pit.

He trotted patiently back and forth, but it was hard work and very slow.

Suddenly Oak had a bright idea.

“We must carry more at a time,” he called out.

Then he tossed down to Ab a wolf-skin, which he had brought along to carry back acorns in.

He had noticed, in going back and forth, a large crop under some oaks.

Ab spread the skin upon the grass beside him and heaped it with dirt.

Then he gathered the corners together and struggled to the bank to empty it.

The digging went on much faster now.

After awhile Ab became tired and out of breath.

Then he threw down the skin and climbed into the tree while Oak went to the pit.

So they worked turn about until the sun was low in the west.

Soon wild beasts would begin to roam about for food.

It was high time that cave boys were at home.

They left the clam-shells in the pit, and both climbed into the lookout.

They looked this way and that to see if the way was clear.

Then they slid quickly to the ground and made a dash for the wooded hills.

Early the next day they were again at the pit, working and watching by turns.

Many a load of dirt was dumped over the bank.

Only once did the watcher notice a waving of the high grass at some distance.

A sharp call brought the worker to the tree in a flash.

Some wild animal passed by, but it did not come near the tree.

The work was quickly taken up again.

Toward dusk of the second day the black dirt in the pit had all been carried away.

The cave boys had come upon a layer of hard-packed gravel.

“Clam-shells will never do for this hard gravel,” shouted Oak from the pit.

“You watch while I try again,” called out Ab.

But Ab soon threw down the clam-shell.

“We must find a better tool, or give up the pitfall,” said Ab as they set out for home that evening.

“Maybe we can find a heavy, sharp stone,” replied Oak.

“We might bring our gourds full of water to soften the hard gravel.”

“Perhaps we will dream of a better way,” said Ab as they parted.

When Ab returned to the pit the next day, he brought with him a sturdy oak stick some six feet long.

It was sharpened to a point and hardened in the fire. It was almost like iron.

He plunged it into the pit and pried the gravel loose.

The chunks were lifted out, while the loose gravel was dished out with the clam-shell.

So they worked on for several days.

It was a good thing for them that one always kept watch.

About three o'clock one afternoon Ab, who was in the pit, heard a yell from the treetop.

He knew what it meant, and he leaped toward the tree just as Oak came tumbling down.

"Run!" Oak said, and they dashed across the open toward the forest.

Up the first big tree they clambered.

Oak shouted as he gasped for breath, "Look!"

Ab looked and saw the tall grass waving in a long line near the tree-clump they had just left.

Such a sight would have frightened all the cave men of the forest together.

Lifted high above the tall grass was the awful head of a great serpent.

The monster seldom came so far from the sea.

One-Ear had seen it but once in all his life, while Stripe-Face had never seen it.

It was the great serpent of the seas, sixty feet long and much thicker across the middle than a man's body.

On its head were queer dull spots.

Ab and Oak almost held their breath from fear, as they watched the terrible monster.

It glided swiftly across a swamp toward the very clump of trees where Ab and Oak had been two minutes before.

The tall grass and weeds shook as it passed along without a sound.

Up over the bank it came where the cave boys had been dumping the dirt from the pit.

It coiled its huge body around the largest tree where the lookout was, and wound itself among the branches.

Its head swung back and forth just below the lowest limb.

There it lay watching for a chance to capture some land animal.

Ab and Oak made off for home as fast as they could run.

CHAPTER IX

A BABY RHINOCEROS TRAPPED

“A sea-serpent? I can hardly believe it,” said One-Ear.

“It is true, just the same,” replied Ab.

“You will believe us when you see that awful serpent,” shouted Oak.

The cave men opened their eyes wide at the story of the terrible visitor.

The next morning the boys' fathers were with them in the treetops a safe distance from the clump of trees.

The monster was still there.

Coiled about the tree and among the branches, the great serpent still hung awaiting its prey.

Little herds of wild horses were feeding in the valley.

Some elk and wild oxen could also be seen here and there.

One-Ear sped away to seek help from the other cave men, while Stripe-Face went to arouse the shell people, who lived some miles down the river.

The shell people were greatly frightened to think the monster had passed right among them.

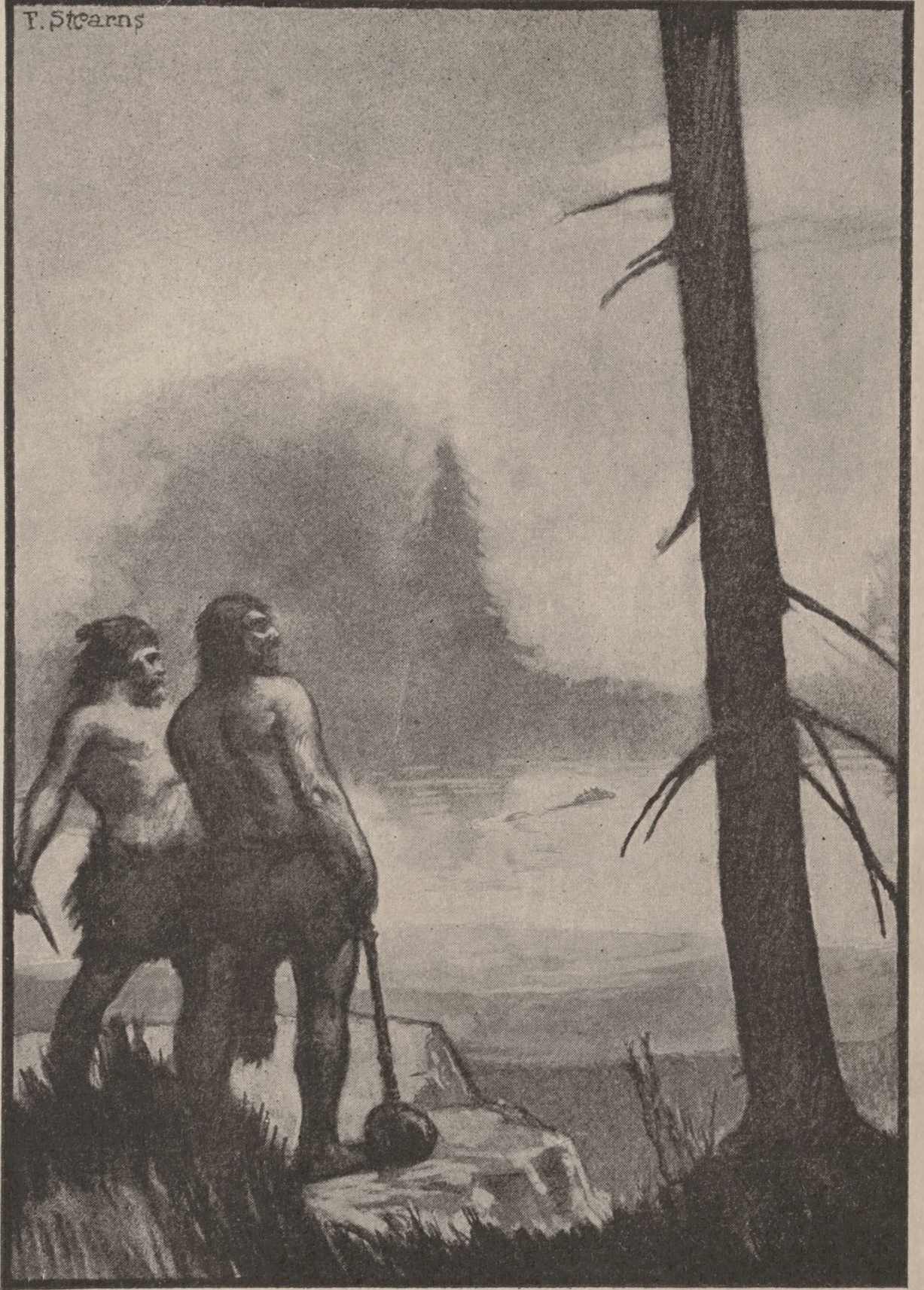
And there was no knowing when they might be swallowed up, several at a time.

A dozen shell men followed Stripe-Face to the place, but they were too late.

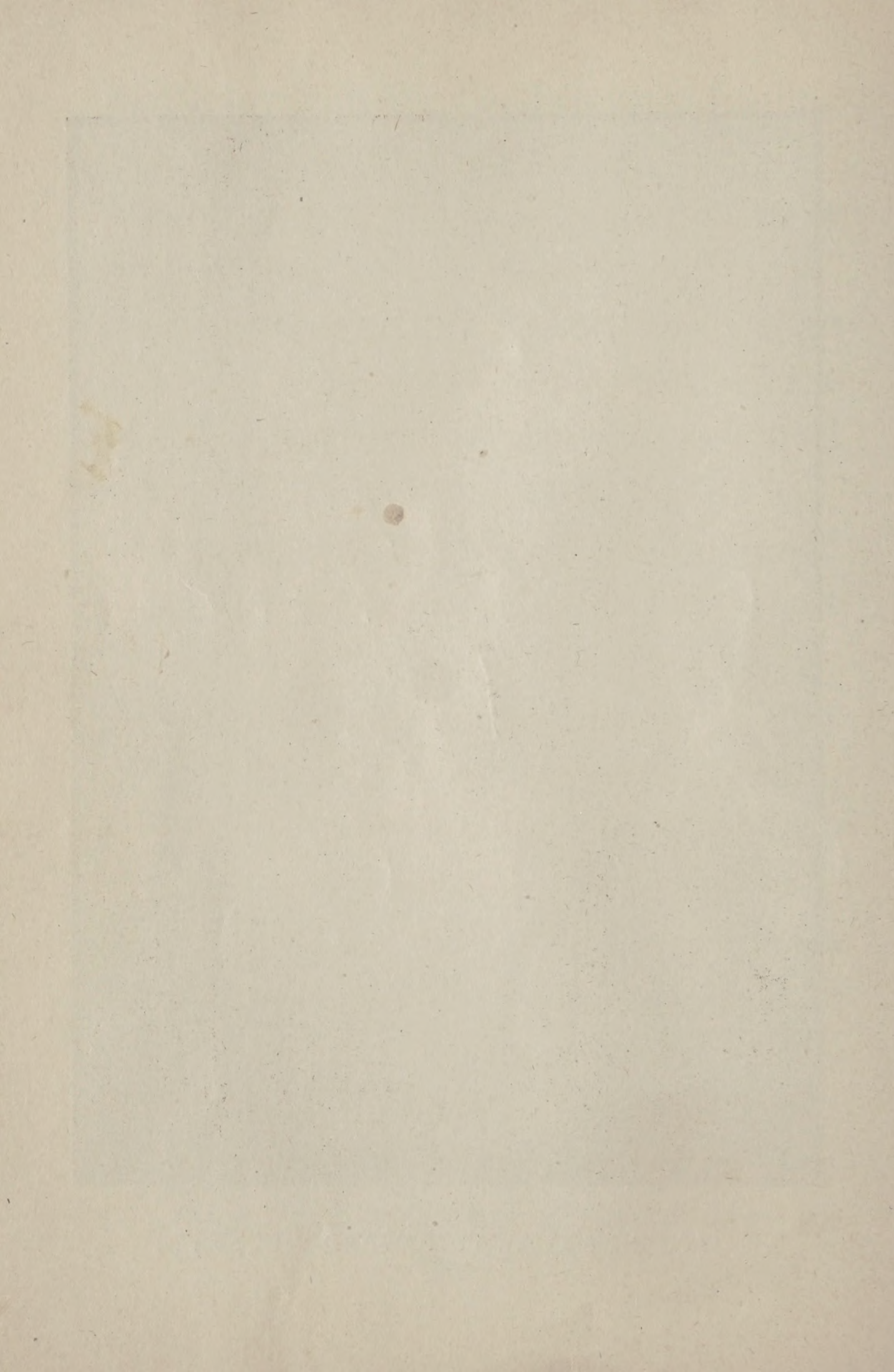
Ab and Oak had seen a wild ox, about a year old, slowly feeding right up to the awful monster.

Suddenly the serpent dipped down and quickly wound itself around the poor little ox. Thus the monster crushed the ox

T. Stearns



"IT DRIFTED AWAY TOWARD THE SEA"



to death and slowly swallowed it whole.

The cave men thought the serpent would lie down to digest its fine breakfast in sleep.

They planned to kill it while it slept.

But it crawled slowly away.

Once in the water, it drifted away toward the sea.

For three or four days Ab and Oak were too excited to think about anything but that terrible visitor.

Many queer animals were now feeding in the little valley.

There were herds of bison and horned cattle—not like what we see to-day—but strange and queer.

There were the wild horses; the great elk and reindeer not far apart.

The big, hairy rhinoceros was again crossing the valley and wallowing in the swamps.

The monster cave bear was lurking about for a chance to strike some careless animal a death blow.

The ugly, fierce hyenas were slinking here and there.

All this change had come, because the boys had been away for about a week.

The fiercest of these beasts usually followed the harmless horses and oxen.

They would not attack a cave man unless very hungry.

When the boys came back to the woods near the valley, the horses and oxen scented them and went away.

The other wild beasts went, too.

In a few days the digging was over.

Now the pit must be covered so the horse would be in before he knew it.

Across the top, they laid slender branches very close together. These they carried in armfuls from the forest.

Over the branches, they spread layers of dry grass.

Then they spread dirt, more twigs and grass again.

The place looked very innocent, and the animal that could notice the trap must have keen eyes indeed.

The boys now kept to the wooded hills so as not to frighten away the game.

Every day they watched with eager eyes from the treetops.

Once a great elk came very close to the pit and stood under the tree-clump, but it soon went its way.

One frosty morning, when they came to watch, they saw tracks and dark lines over the valley everywhere in the frost.

Soon they saw that there was no frost around the pit, and they shouted for joy.

Some animal must have been trampling about it.

With spear in hand, they bounded side by side to the edge of the covered trap.

When they saw what the pitfall held, they danced and yelled together.

In that pitfall was a young rhinoceros calf only a few months old.

But it was so big that it almost filled the pit.

It was wedged in so tightly that it could not move in any direction.

It struggled clumsily, when it saw the cave boys, but it was helpless.

All about the pitfall, the earth was plowed in furrows and beaten down by the feet of some monstrous animal.

It was plain that the mother had spent the night about the young calf, trying to help it out.

The boys did not laugh long, for they knew there was danger if the mother was near.

Where had she gone?

They looked about but could see no trace of her.

Suddenly there was a splashing among the bushes in the swamp near by.

Some huge animal was rushing toward the pit.

They clambered up the tree just as the mother rhinoceros charged upon them, mad with rage.

CHAPTER X

SABRE-TOOTH AND THE RHINOCEROS

The rhinoceros of the stone age was a monstrous animal.

It was larger and fiercer than those of to-day.

Its skin was an inch thick and as tough as leather.

It was covered with dark, curly hair.

It was king of all the dangerous beasts of those days.

It was powerful, too, and as bold as a lion. Nothing could stop its mad rush.

Even the huge mammoth and Sabre-Tooth, the horrible cave tiger, kept out of its way.

But the rhinoceros was a stupid animal, and it could not see far. Still the monster beast could see the boys in the tree.

She charged directly at them, snorting fiercely.

Her great body touched the tree as she passed, and made it shake.

But the boys were safe.

The beast snorted about for a time and then returned to the pitfall.

She began walking round and round her calf.

The poor mother would get down on her knees and plow the dirt with her horns.

She would seek to get her snout beneath the calf's body to lift it out, but every time she failed.

The calf fitted too tightly into the pit.

The boys clung to their perches.

Hours passed, but the mother would not leave.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, when she went away to wallow and rest in the swamp.

Several times she came back snorting, but at last she settled down in the swamp, tired out.

The boys waited until all was quiet.

As soon as they thought the beast was asleep, they slid down the tree.

They stole by the pitfall toward the forest, almost holding their breath for fear they might make a noise.

Soon they were on the run for the forest-covered hills.

Each started with all speed for his home.

Such news as they had to tell!

An hour later they returned with their fathers, all armed with their best weapons.

As they stood looking from the hilltop, all seemed quiet about the pitfall.

It was now late in the afternoon.

So they thought the best plan was to steal down across the valley, kill the calf, and then run back to the hills.

They thought that when the mother found her calf dead, she would leave the valley.

Then the cave men could take the calf out, and there would be a great feast on its tender flesh.

But the wind blew from the hill, where the cave men were, toward the river.

The rhinoceros had a keen scent, if it could not see far.

Still they decided to risk a trial.

So they set out as noiselessly as tigers.

They were not half way across the valley, when the mother rhinoceros scented them.

She floundered up and charged wildly in their direction.

The men and boys fled to the hills, but none too soon.

The angry beast was close behind them.

She walked in circles about the trees into which they had climbed, snorting with rage.

After awhile she went back to her calf to try again to lift it out.

It was dusk now, and night was creeping over forest and valley.

The rhinoceros once more left her babe for the swamp.

Should the cave men risk their lives again by trying to reach the pitfall from another direction?

It was getting darker, and the beasts of prey were roaming about for food.

They decided to try to reach the pit from another direction, so the mother beast could not scent them.

They had gone but a little way when

One-Ear leaped back and waved his hand to the others to stop.

He pointed to where the high grass was waving.

Some big animal was moving toward the pitfall.

Straining their eyes, they saw a dark body coming nearer and nearer the helpless calf.

It crouched down like a huge cat, not twenty feet from the pit.

Then with a terrible roar, the dark animal shot through the air and landed on the back of the poor rhinoceros calf.

It was a big cave tiger.

They could hear wild cries of pain and suffering, and the fearful hoarse growls of the tiger.

For a moment all was quiet.

Then came the fierce snorts of the huge rhinoceros mother, coming with all speed.

She charged at the great tiger.

Such fierce snorting and terrible roaring!

The cave men knew that a terrible battle was going on, but they could not see distinctly.

How would it end?

The beasts were still fighting, when it became so dark that the men and boys fled swiftly toward home.

Early next morning the four were together again on the hill near the battle ground.

There was no sound of life.

All the other animals had fled at the sounds of the cave tiger and rhinoceros.

The cave men and their sons cautiously made their way toward the pitfall.

They found the half-eaten body of the calf in the pitfall.

It had no doubt been killed by the tiger's first blow.

Its back had been broken by the tiger's powerful paw.

All about were signs of the deadly battle, but no animals could be seen.

The huge rhinoceros could not catch the monster cat upon its sharp horns.

Nor could the tiger pierce the tough hide of the rhinoceros.

The long, weary battle had, perhaps, ended by the tiger leaving the mother with her dead calf.

When she knew her young to be surely dead, she left the valley.

The tiger had then returned and fed its fill. But there was much good meat left.

One-Ear and Stripe-Face set to work with their flint knives to cut out great lumps of meat from the body in the pit.

Suddenly they remembered that the tiger never left its prey until it was all eaten.

The tiger must be lying asleep not far away.

Suppose he should awake and return on his soft paws!

The four fled to the hills carrying masses of flesh.

There was enough food for a day or two for both families.

Some days later the boys returned again to find only bones in the pitfall they had dug.

CHAPTER XI

TAMING THE WOLF CUBS

Ab and Oak became the best bird hunters among all the cave boys.

They knew the best way to set a snare, and they could hurl a stone straight to the mark.

There were many kinds of birds on land as well as on the creeks and rivers.

Wild geese and ducks could be seen in great flocks upon the water.

When the ducks came close to shore to feed, the young hunters would often leap from their hiding place and hurl stones among the thick bunch.

They seldom failed to bring down at least one bird among so many.

There were eggs to be found along the shore; and an egg, baked in ashes, was a great treat.

The boys often speared a muskrat.

Indians and some of the white hunters of Canada to-day still eat roasted muskrat.

Once Ab saw a seal, which had come up the river from the sea.

He called to Oak, and they gave chase along the bank, as the seal darted along in the water.

They followed it for miles along the river bank, hurling stones and clubs, but it escaped.

Such sport as they had on land, too!

There were the wild hogs, but they were wary, and the big boars were dangerous.

Once in awhile the lads pounced upon a litter of young pigs.

These they soon pierced with their flint-headed spears.

Then the caves were filled with the delicious odor of roast pig.

Often the young hunters chased a marten, a marmot or a hedgehog to its burrow in the ground.

Then how they did dig!

Clam-shells or spade-sticks hardened in the fire were brought into use.

It was slow work, but the boys liked it, and their families needed food.

They had no dog to help, when the animal was reached, but they seldom allowed one to get away.

It was a great night in the cave when Ab brought home, one evening, two fluffy, gray bundles.

They were not larger than kittens, but they were two young wolves.

He tied them in a corner with thongs of sinew.

For some time Ab and Oak had noted

lurking shadows on the rocky hill close by the river, some distance below the cave of Ab.

They resolved to find out what the objects were.

An ugly brute was the wolf of the cave man's time.

Still he would not fight alone.

So Ab and Oak, both well armed, made a hunt for the dens.

They found two dens, each with young in them.

Each boy seized two cubs, and off they ran with as much speed as was in them.

Luckily for them, the robbed mother wolf was too far away to hear them.

So the boys reached home safely with their prizes.

Ab was delighted.

He was determined to feed his cubs—to care for them and to keep them alive.



AB PLAYING WITH THE WOLF CUBS

His little brother, Bark, and sister, Beech-Leaf, were wild with joy over them.

Baby Beech-Leaf was very fond of the little beasts and could usually be found lying in the corner with them.

The baby wolves learned in time to play with her as if she were a cub herself.

Bark, too, played with the little beasts.

Even the father and mother became interested in the young wolves.

Ab was a little disappointed, because the wild things would not become tame in a few days.

The cubs grew, and their teeth became longer and sharper.

Then there were little battles among the children and their wild playmates.

The arms of Bark and Beach-Leaf were soon so scarred that Ab had to turn his pets loose.

But they did not flee to the forest as he thought they would.

Each night they were at the entrance of the cave, whining for meat.

Bones were thrown to them, and they snarled and yelped for joy.

The young wolves hung about the cave and growled whenever strangers came, just as watchdogs do now.

One day, after they were full grown wolves, one of them was found in the rear of the cave with four little young cubs lying beside her.

Who could turn the little mother and her cubs out of the cave now?

The little puppies were petted and grew up tamer and more willing to obey than the older wolves had been.

The wolves became useful to the family, and soon other cave men came to Ab's home for a pair of pets.

As time went by these wolves became tamer.

But it was a long, long time before children could play with them safely.

The cave men came to use tame wolves to hunt with.

They became fine watch dogs, too.

They were the great grandfathers of all the dogs of to-day.

CHAPTER XII

OLD MOK

One day a crippled man came to live in Ab's home. He was called Old Mok.

He was not very old, but he was bent and could only hobble about.

One of his legs was curved, because of a battle he had with a wild beast.

He had a shock of grizzled hair and a short stiff beard.

While his legs were weak, his brain and arms were strong.

His arms were those of a great climber.

He was at home in the treetops, but he seldom went far from the cave.

In his youth Old Mok had been a mighty hunter.

He had learned the ways of beasts and swimming things.

He knew, better than any other cave man, the best way to capture an animal.

But he could not hunt any more.

Do you think the cave people would cast Old Mok out to be eaten by the wild beasts?

No, indeed, Old Mok was welcome in any cave home in all the valley.

He was such a skillful maker of weapons that each cave family gladly offered him a home.

He had lived in many different homes, but now he had come to live with his old friend, One-Ear.

He was a fierce-looking old man, but Ab liked him from the very first.

Ab sometimes saw a twinkle in his fierce eyes.

So this crippled old man and the healthy lad became fast friends.

Old Mok could chip flint or carve a mammoth tooth in a way that was wonderful to all the other cave men.

When Ab had a great hunt planned, he always told Old Mok about it and asked his advice.

Old Mok had grown fond of this strong young lad, and they were together much of the time.

Ab looked on, while Old Mok made spearheads and knives and skinscrapers from flint.

They found pieces of flint shaped like a spear. Flint was the hardest substance that the cave people knew about.

It looked solid, but it was really made up of layers or flakes.

These flakes could be chipped or pried off, if one knew how to do it.

These chips, or flakes of flint, had sharp, rough edges.

On one side, they were hollow like the inside of a spoon.

On the other side, they were round like the outside of a spoon.

This did not make a good tool.

What the cave men wanted was a spear-head rounded on both sides, but sharp at the edges.

Old Mok showed Ab how to chip away flakes first on one side and then on the other, till only the core was left.

The core proved to be just what they wanted, for it made a mighty spear-head.

When Old Mok wished to make a heavy ax or mallet, he used granite or red-stone.

It took a long time to make a good weapon, and much hard work—as well as skill.

Almost anybody could break off flakes

of flint, but all the chips must be about the same size, or the weapon was spoiled.

Old Mok could do this perfectly.

Nobody tried to equal Old Mok, for he knew just how hard to strike every time, and how to shape the core of flint.

Ab hung about the old man at his work and was at last allowed to help him.

Sometimes Ab made the long spear shafts, which were of wood.

For this work he used a flint scraper.

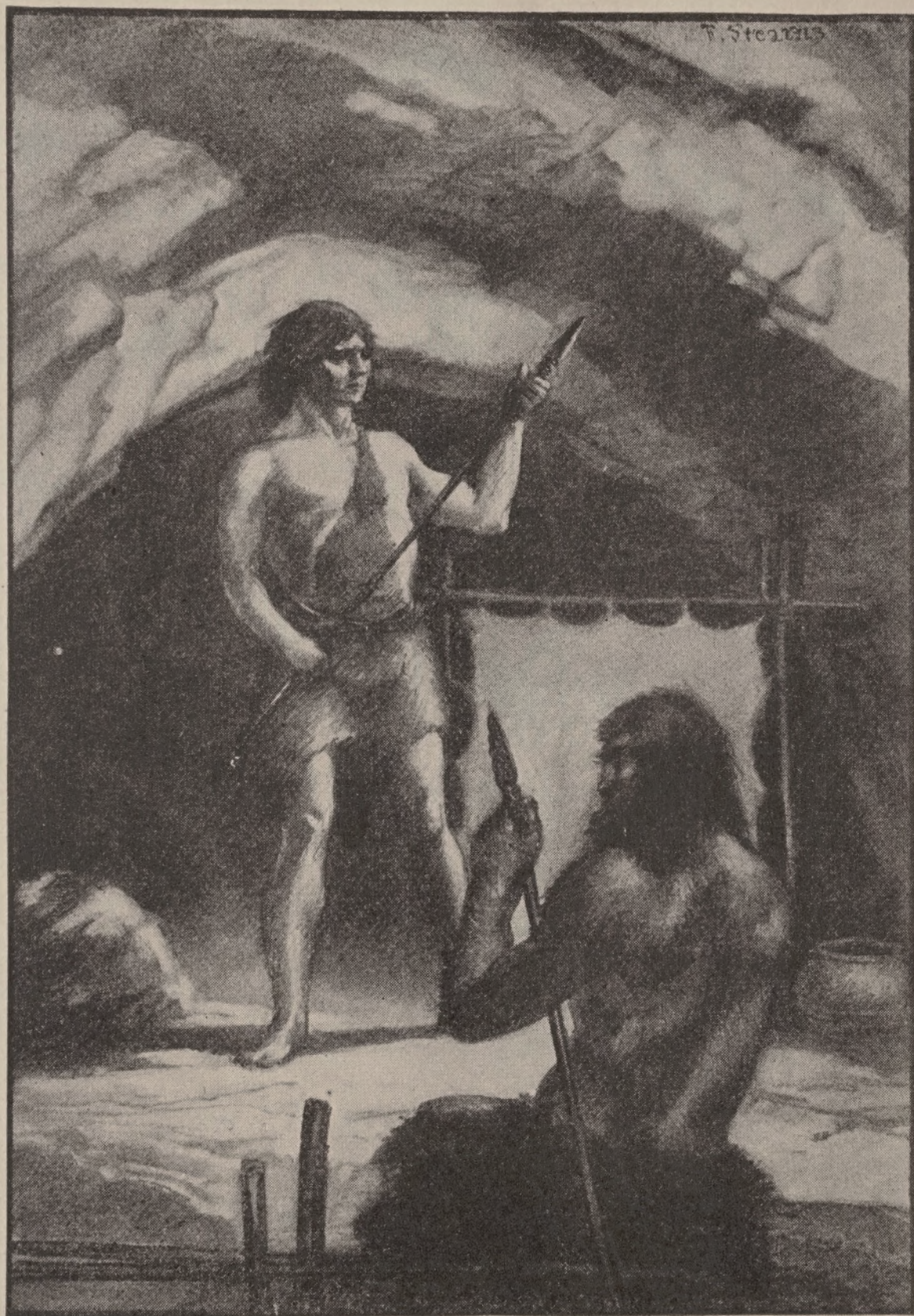
At last Old Mok allowed Ab to try his hand at chipping stone.

He gave Ab, at first, only those pieces of flint that were not very good.

So he did not care if Ab spoiled them, and a great many were spoiled.

But Ab had a good eye and a steady hand, and in time he learned to strike off a flake almost as well as his teacher.

He now tried his hand at the very fine



"SOMETIMES AB MADE THE LONG SPEAR SHAFTS"

chipping which completed the weapon, and Old Mok said it was good enough for any hunter to use.

Ab was always trying a new kind of flint chipper, or he held one stone on the flint and tapped on this with another stone.

He was always bent on making the flint knives a little thinner, or the spearhead a trifle heavier.

And he kept asking Old Mok so many questions that nobody could answer all of them.

One-Ear was delighted at the fine work of his son, Ab, for the family always needed new weapons.

One-Ear was a mighty hunter, but Ab could now make better tools than his father.

CHAPTER XIII

AB'S NEW METHOD OF COOKING

Red-Spot was as fine a cook as could be found among the cave dwellers.

She was proud of her cooking utensils. There was the wood fire to cook by.

Red-Spot had long, pointed sticks on which she put all kinds of meat and held them over the fire to broil.

There was too much smoke in such a way of broiling to suit us to-day, but the cave people did not mind the taste of smoke.

They were glad enough to get their meat cooked in any way they could.

Red-Spot knew how to roast nuts and clams in the hot coals and ashes.

She had learned how to roast fish, too.

She first covered the fish with clay so the hot coals would not touch it, and then covered it—clay and all—with live coals and ashes.

What fine eating this must have been!

The cave people did not know how to make cooking vessels out of clay.

Neither did they know what iron is.

So they had no vessels that could hold water and be used for cooking over a fire.

They learned how to boil meat in a very strange way.

One day Ab happend to throw some hot stones from the ashes into some water.

He thought it was great fun to hear it sizzle and see the steam.

He kept throwing in hot stones until he could not find any more.

Then he tried to get the stones out of

the water, and the water was so hot it burnt his hand badly.

He cried out in pain.

Bark came running to see what was the matter.

Ab told him not to touch the wicked water.

Bark walked up close and threw in a bone from which he was eating to see if the water would sizzle.

Then he tried to get it out and got burnt, too.

For a long time nobody dared to touch the wicked water.

The next day Ab resolved to find out if the water was still angry at him.

So he put his finger in very slowly and found it was cold.

Being hungry, he seized the meat bone that Bark had put into the water.

What fine eating it was!

Ab thought he had never tasted anything so good.

The whole family had a taste of the first stew.

Red-Spot often had stews after that, when Ab was through making the water angry with hot stones.

Everybody soon learned Ab's way of cooking meat.

It was a great discovery for the cave people.

CHAPTER XIV

AB AND HIS BIG KETTLE

Ab was a pretty good boy to his mother.

He had to be, for Red-Spot was a strong woman, and a blow from her hand was something to be feared.

So he helped do many things about the cave.

He wanted to make for his mother the biggest boiling pot to be found in those days.

Old Mok encouraged him.

Ab said he would make it out of a huge sandstone rock that lay just outside the cave.

It had a top, which was nearly flat.

Ab thought he could work better, if he could get this big rock inside the cave.

So he got the whole family to help him roll it into the cave, and it was all they could do to move it.

After much hard lifting, Ab had the stone where he wanted it.

A great pot it was to be!

Old Mok took a stone ax and chipped out a circle on the flat top of the stone.

The circle was two feet across.

Inside this circle the sandstone must be dug out as deep as they wished to make the kettle.

Hard work this was, but Ab was equal to the job.

He went at his task like a brave lad.

He pecked away with a stone chisel set firmly in reindeer's horn. In a few days he had made quite a hollow, but he got

along so slowly that he began to wonder how he might plan to dig faster.

The sandstone was hard.

Ab wanted more weight to his chisel.

He thought much.

“Ha!” said Ab. “I think I have it now.”

He took a long stick and bound his chisel to it at one end with strips of skin.

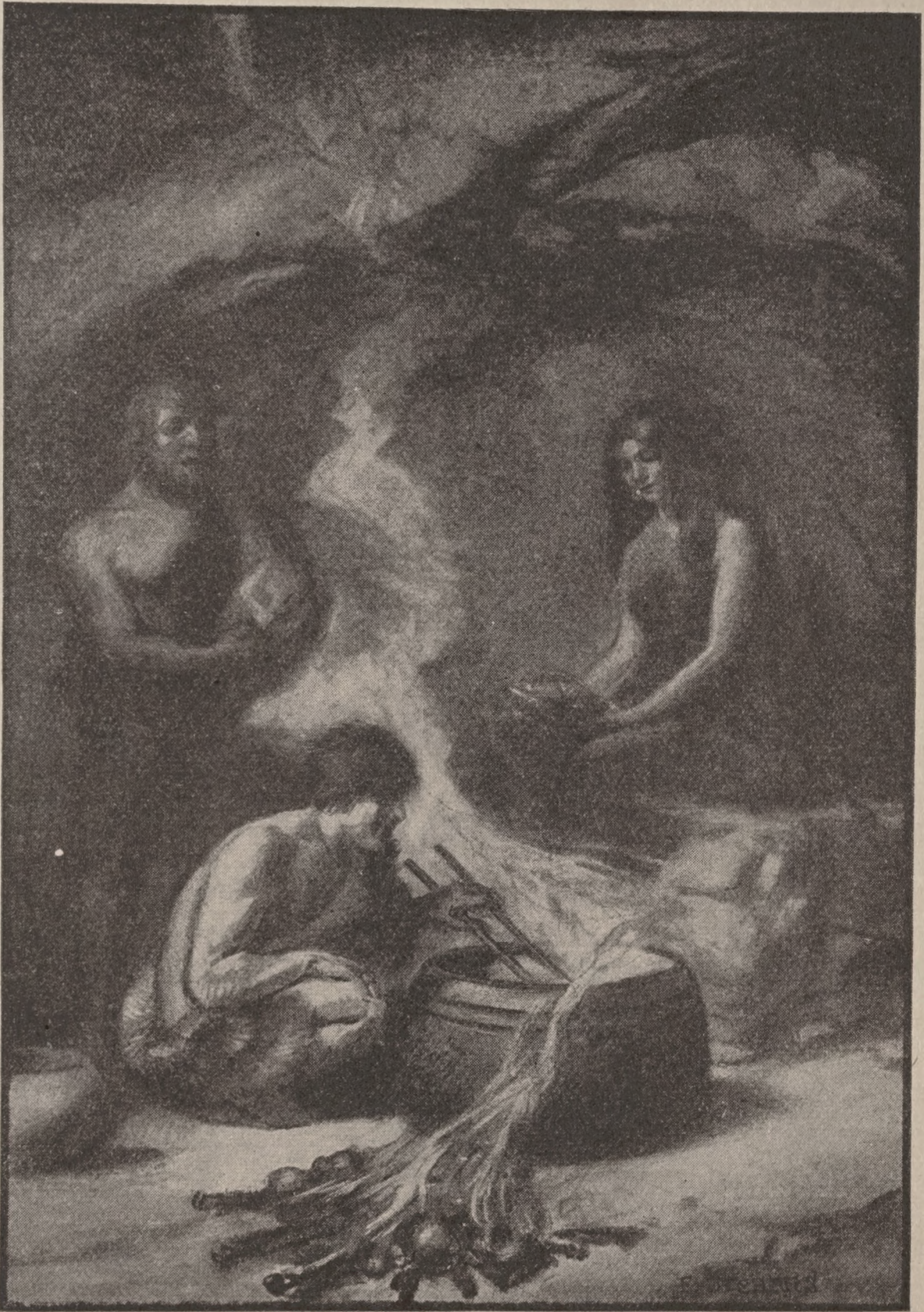
To the other end of the stick he tied a stone, that was rather heavy. Then with both hands he lifted his new tool high and let it drop into the sandstone.

The flint chisel bit more deeply than before, and sand flew in every direction.

“Hurrah!” cried Ab, “that is fine!”

Before many days the lad had dug in the sandstone rock a deep hollow, that would hold much meat and water.

Ab was delighted, and Red-Spot was proud of her son, who had made such a big kettle.



"AB RAKED OUT THE HOT STONES AND DROPPED
THEM INTO THE KETTLE"

Ab filled it nearly full of water and put great chunks of reindeer meat into it, for One-Ear had had a lucky hunt that day.

The cave fire was heaped high with dry wood, and soon there was a wide bed of coals.

Upon these coals Ab threw many little stones.

In a little while they were shining hot.

Ab made a sort of tongs out of green withes.

With these he raked out the hot stones and dropped them into the kettle of meat and water.

Within a little time the water was fairly boiling.

The monster stew was soon giving off rich odors.

Now the feast was ready.

There was a rush for the clam-shells, which served for soup dishes or cups. Each

one had a sharp stick with which to spear for a piece of the boiled meat.

Bark and Beech-Leaf were not getting their share, and they set up a clamor.

The stew was delicious, and there was plenty for all.

You might not like such a stew, for the cave men had no salt in it, but perhaps the dirt on the stones made a flavor to suit them.

CHAPTER XV.

AB MAKES A NEW WEAPON.

It happened one afternoon when Ab was about twenty years old, that he was lying lazily upon the ground near the cave.

Not far away were Bark and Beech-Leaf rolling about.

Bark had found a long, stiff twig.

He was idly bending the ends of the twig together and then letting them fly apart with a snap.

He did this as he walked toward little Beech-Leaf to frighten her.

Tired of this, at last, Bark drew forth a string of sinew from the pouch in his skin cloak.

He drew the ends of the strong twig nearly together like a bow.

Then he tied the string to both ends to hold it fast.

Bark had made something new, but he did not know what it was, nor how to use it.

He drew the string back and let it go with a twang!

“What a funny noise!” said Beech-Leaf.

Bark liked it, too; so he kept up the twanging sound.

After a while he picked up a long, slender stick of white wood. With this he began drumming upon the tight string.

This made a new kind of noise.

“What a fine plaything!” said Beech-Leaf.

At last Bark put one end of his stick against the string and pushed it back until the other end of the stick pressed against the inside of the twig.

This was something new, too.

Bark found the stick would stay between the taut string and the twig without being held there.

Once, when he had the stick there, something dreadful happened.

Bark was drawing the stick back against the string, when both the stick and string slipped from his hand, and the stick flew away.

Just then Beech-Leaf set up a loud cry.

She screamed terribly.

Ab leaped to his feet and was by his sister in a moment.

He found her screaming and holding out her fat little arm.

From her arm dangled the little shaft of wood, which Bark had been playing with.

The stick had pierced her arm deeply enough to make it hold.

Bark stood looking at her in wonder and fear.

Ab did not know but that Bark had meant to hurt her, so he started to punish him.

With a yell, Bark ran behind a tree.

He shrieked out that he did not mean to do it.

He told Ab about his queer little play-thing and offered to show him how it happened.

When Ab saw that Beech-Leaf was not badly hurt, he began to laugh.

The stick had not gone much deeper than the skin.

So Ab let Bark show him how it happened.

Bark took the little bow and stick, drew back and let it go.

This time there was another yell, but it was not that of a child.

His arrow had hit his big brother in the chest.

Bark threw down the toy and fled into the forest with a howl of fear.

He thought Ab would surely whip him.

Ab did start after his little brother, but he soon stopped and plucked away the stick, which had not gone deeply in.

He knew that Bark was really not to blame.

He picked up the plaything and began to look at it closely.

He drew back the arrow stick, as he had seen Bark do, and let it go.

Away flew the arrow, farther than his strong arm could have tossed it.

“Ho, ho!” cried Ab. “That is a fine plaything.”

“I’ll make one like it, only larger,” he said.

Ab then called Bark to come back.

They played with this wonderful bow and arrow for an hour or more.

The next day Ab cut from the limb of a tree a branch as thick as his finger and a yard long.

They trimmed the little twigs off and then bent it back, as Bark had done the twig.

Then Ab tied a strong sinew across.

It was not a bad bow.

Ab next cut a straight willow twig nearly as long as the bow.

When he tried his new bow and arrow, he was greatly astonished.

With his strong arm, he drew the arrow stick back nearly to its head and let it go.

The arrow flew so fast and so far that Ab had a long hunt to find it.

Then he went into an open place so he might follow the arrow with his eye.

Again he drew the arrow back to the end and let it fly!

“Wonderful!” cried Ab.

The arrow flew straight and deep into the bark of an oak tree and hung there quivering.

A bright idea came into Ab’s mind.

“What if I should put a flint point on it and point it at a reindeer,” said Ab.

Off he ran with great delight to show this wonderful new plaything to old Mok.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT SECRET

Old Mok listened to what Ab said about his wonderful plaything.

Ab begged him to come out and see what it would do.

At first Old Mok laughed at Ab.

He said it must be only a silly toy.

But at last he hobbled out into the open place to see with his own eyes.

Ab showed his old friend what the thing would do. At the second shot Old Mok's face beamed with delight.

"Ab," he said, "run to the cave and bring my best spear."

Ab was back as soon as his strong legs could carry him.

He found Old Mok had stepped off just a spear's throw from the biggest oak tree.

“Stand here and throw your spear at the tree,” said Mok.

“Throw as hard as you can.”

Ab threw the spear with all his might at the tree.

But he was so far away that the flint point pierced only the bark and fell to the ground.

“Now take the plaything,” said Old Mok, “and throw your little shaft at the same tree.”

Ab did as he was told.

Several times he shot, but each time he missed the big tree.

At last he aimed better and hit it, whack!

Old Mok laughed for joy.

“It may be there is something to your plaything,” he said.

“We will make a better one. We will make a stronger bow and a straighter arrow.

“On the end of the arrow, we will put a little flint spear-head.”

For days they worked, and at last they made a fine bow of ash.

The arrow was very straight, and it had a sharp flint point on one end.

At the other end they cut out a notch to fit it to the string.

With this fine bow they stood two spear throws from the tree.

With strong arms Ab drew back the arrow in the big bow.

Twang! and the arrow whistled through the air.

Straight to the tree it flew, and buried its flint head deep in the wood.

Old Mok and Ab clapped their hands and shouted for joy.

This was a better weapon than the cave men had ever seen before.

Ab could hardly wait till he could find an animal, so anxious was he to use his wonderful bow and arrow.

Off he went to hunt, happy as a lark.

He carried his stone ax and flint knife, but he left the old spear at home.

He had something better than a spear now.

He carried a big, strong bow and a sheaf of arrows, for he knew one would not be enough.

He had made a quiver for the arrows.

It was a hollow bone from a mammoth's leg. They had drilled holes and tied a wooden bottom to it.

It seemed a dreadfully long time before he found any game.

Late in the afternoon, Ab came upon a little cliff by a creek.

Just across the creek he saw a fine herd of little deer.

They were feeding and slowly walking toward him.

By good luck, the wind was blowing from them toward him so they could not scent him.

He hid among the bushes.

Slowly towards him came the herd.

The best grass was close by the creek.

Soon nearly a hundred of them were almost within a spear's throw of the young hunter.

Ab thought he could surely hit one among so many.

So he sprang to his feet and drew his arrow to the head.

The deer heard him and huddled together.

They did not know which way to run.

Twang! went the string.



"THE ARROW WHISTLED THROUGH THE AIR"

The arrow whistled through the air.

It hit with a thud!—right among the herd.

Away ran the herd, quick as a flash, all but one.

Ab saw that one had fallen.

He ran to it and found the arrow had pierced so deeply that he could see the flint-head on the other side of the deer.

Ab was wild with joy.

Old Mok was, too, when Ab told his story about it.

So happy were they, that they resolved to keep it all a mighty secret.

And so they did.

Ab almost burst with his secret every time he saw Oak, but for a long time, he did not tell it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MAMMOTH HUNT

One day, in late autumn, a cave man came running down the river bank.

Panting for breath, he stopped at the cave of One-Ear.

He had news, great news!

He told his story quickly.

It was old Hilltop, and he was tired and hungry after his long run.

Somebody must carry the news to the shell people.

Ab seized his weapons like a flash and sped off bearing the joyful news.

All the cave men and shell people were to come together quickly for a great hunt.

Hilltop brought the news that a herd of

mammoth had been seen in the hills. It was not often that the mammoth came into the land of the cave men.

So a wonderful hunt it was to be!

If enough men could be gathered to bring down just one huge mammoth, how happy they would be!

There would be food in plenty for all for a long time.

When Ab burst upon the shell people with the news, there was great excitement.

People were running here and there gathering their best weapons.

Others were choosing the bravest hunters.

Within half an hour, Ab was on his way back.

With him were half a hundred shell people, all armed.

They soon came to the cave of Hilltop,

where the cave men and shell people were to meet.

Hilltop was to be the leader in the great hunt, and a hundred men were ready to follow him.

Ab and Oak were among the hunters, and how happy they were!

The mammoth was a monster beast, much bigger than our elephant and fiercer.

He was powerful, too.

No weapon, that the cave people had, would pierce his thick, tough skin.

The huge beast cared no more for all the cave men with their spears than he did for flies.

If a cave man troubled him he would seize the little man with his huge trunk.

Then he would hurl him against a tree or rock and kill him.

Or the big beast might trample a dozen men to death in a moment.

There was only one thing that the mammoth feared, and that was fire.

From fire the mammoth would flee in terror.

Hilltop said the herd were feeding on a high cliff, that had steep slopes on three sides.

He said, "We will form a line of torches behind the herd and drive them over the cliff."

What a fine plan that was!

So they gathered roots of fallen pine trees and many pine knots.

These would burn for hours as torches.

Each man carried a torch and his other weapons.

There were nineteen mammoth in the herd.

They were still feeding near the edge of the steep cliff.

All were now ready.

The torches were lighted, and the hundred men formed into a long, blazing line.

Hilltop gave the signal, and off through the forest they swept.

Soon they saw a great bull with his long, white tusks.

The hunters set up a shout and rushed out of the woods behind the herd.

At this the herd ran up close to the edge of the cliff.

They saw they were surrounded by a line of fire on one side and by steep cliffs on the other.

There was no way out of the trap.

Then they charged madly upon the line of torches.

The cave men shook with fear as the huge beasts came right at them.

But every hunter was a brave man, and the burning torches stopped the herd for a moment.

Old Hilltop hurled his spear into the side of a great bull.

With a mad roar, the beast plunged right through the line of fire.

And the others followed helter-skelter.

There was shouting of men and roaring of beasts.

Three men were trampled to death.

All the herd got away but one, that had been feeding alone.

He came up too late to join the herd, when they broke through the line.

So he raged madly up and down the line of fire.

He was a terrible sight with his huge, white tusks and dark, shaggy hair!

His eyes flashed fire, and he raised his big trunk and gave a fearful roar.

Ab thought he was as big as a mountain.

A dozen spears struck the beast at once.

He turned toward the cliff.

Close at his heels came the line of fire.

The yells of the men and the roaring of the mad beast echoed through the woods.

They chased him right up to the edge of the cliff, but he stopped.

One brave man went close up to the beast and tried to spear him in the side.

The mammoth shot his trunk down and picked up the man.

He hurled him through the air to death against the trunk of a big tree.

Then, with a terrible roar, he turned on the men, but just then he slipped on the ice and fell.

Over the cliff he rolled, with a great mass of snow and ice.

Down he went—crashing through the treetops a hundred feet below.

A great shout of joy was heard as the men looked over the cliff.

There lay the big beast, half covered with snow and ice.



"WITH A TERRIBLE ROAR HE TURNED ON THE MEN"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GREAT FEAST

Who will reach the mammoth first?

Both ways around the cliff ran the hunters.

Ab and Oak were bound to be first, and they were.

They found the huge beast already dead at the base of the cliff.

What a sight it was !

It was the finest prize the cave men had ever captured.

One great, white tusk had been broken off and lay some distance from the mountain of flesh.

“A feast! a feast!” they cried.

The hunters were very much excited.

A dozen men pounced upon the broken tusk.

Each man wanted it, because a mammoth tusk was a great prize in every cave home.

It looked as though there would be trouble.

But the big tusk was finally laid aside to be divided later.

All things were made ready for the feast on the following day.

Swift-footed runners darted along the forest paths in every direction to call the cave and shell people to the feast.

Everybody who could come was invited.

But the hungry hunters could not wait.

They must taste mammoth flesh at once.

With big flint knives some began to take away the tough skin.

This was divided among the hunters, but old Hilltop got the biggest share.

Some cut off long slices of meat, while others built fires.

Soon the brave hunters ate their fill.

How good it was!

It was better than bear meat, or wild horse.

Night soon came upon them.

Some kept the fires going, while others lay down and slept.

The next morning was bright and clear.

From every direction came flocks of hungry men, women and children.

A score of fires were burning, and everywhere was the odor of broiling meat.

The feast began early and went on hour after hour, as new groups came.

The families of Oak and Ab were among the first to arrive.

Bark and Beech-Leaf looked at the mountain of flesh with wide, wondering eyes.

Then they ran quickly to Ab.

How proud they were of their big brother!

There was queer clucking talk and laughing everywhere.

Stone hammers were busy cracking the small bones, for the marrow was the best food of all.

There was plenty of meat in every hut and cave for many a day.

Ab was eating a choice bit of meat when he saw several girls not far away, also eating.

One was slender and beautiful.

She was the daughter of old Hilltop, and her name was Lightfoot.

Ab liked her at once, and when she looked up he tossed her a bit of juicy meat.

She caught it and smiled at him.

When Ab walked home that night he thought "How I should like to have Lightfoot live in a nice cave home with me!

"I must find a cave.

"Perhaps she will like to come."



"AB TOSSED HER A BIT OF JUICY MEAT"

CHAPTER XIX

THE NEW CAVE HOME

A few days after the feast of the mammoth's flesh, Ab went in search of a new home for himself and Lightfoot.

He hunted far and wide to find one good enough to offer her.

At last he found a fine, large cave far up the river.

All about it lived many dangerous wild beasts.

But did not Ab have his wonderful new weapon?

So he set to work to get it ready for his bride.

At last, after many days, this fine home was ready for Lightfoot.

Now he must see her and tell her about it.
So he set out for the cave of old Hilltop.

As he came near the cave, he heard some one in a treetop.

He looked up and saw Lightfoot.

In a moment he was beside her on the limb saying, "Would you not like to go with me and live in a cave all our own?"

"I should like it very much," said pretty little Lightfoot, "but every cave has some family in it."

"I know a fine cave on that high point far up the river," said Ab.

But Lightfoot said quickly, "That is where the cave bears and tigers live. I should be afraid there."

And then Ab said proudly, "I have a wonderful new weapon.

"Nobody knows about it but Old Mok and me.

"It is a bow and arrow.

“I can shoot straight and very far with it.

“Once I killed a deer two spear throws away.

“The arrow went quite through the beast.

“I am sure I can kill a cave bear and even Sabre-Tooth with it.

“Don’t you think we would be safe there?”

Lightfoot had long wanted a cave of her own.

So when she looked at strong, brave Ab and heard about his wonderful bow and arrow, she said she would go.

Ab went to Hilltop with Lightfoot and said, “Lightfoot is going with me to a new cave on the high point.

“I can take care of her.

“I am strong.”

So Hilltop watched Ab and Lightfoot

set out through the forest for their dangerous new home.

After a long journey they reached it just as the sun was setting.

How delighted Lightfoot was with her big cave home!

Smoke was curling up from the fire, which Ab had built the day before.

Ab rolled the great stone away from the entrance, and together they walked into their new home.

CHAPTER XX

AB AND LIGHTFOOT AND THE CAVE BEARS

The next morning Ab was glad to show Lightfoot his wonderful bow and arrow.

In front of their cave was an open place.

Farther away were some scattered trees and then the forest.

They sat down on a fallen pine tree.

Ab proudly showed her the new weapon.

He told her of Bark and Beech-Leaf and the little bow.

Then Ab pointed an arrow at a knot in a tree near by.

Twang! went the string.

Away flew the arrow, and it hit the mark in the very center.

Even with all her strength, Lightfoot could not pull the arrow out.

She was delighted with Ab's new invention.

She wanted to learn how to shoot it, too.

Ab handed her the bow, but he still held the bone quiver full of Old Mok's best arrows.

He showed Lightfoot first how to bend and string the bow.

Several times she failed to do it well, but at last she did it in a way that pleased her teacher.

While Ab was choosing a fine arrow with a clean flint head for her first shot, they both suddenly heard a fierce growl close behind them.

It was a great cave bear.

Each sprang for the nearest tree.

They had just reached the lower limbs when two huge brown bears sprang at them.

Ab and Lightfoot climbed quickly to the very treetops.

But Lightfoot was in one tree with the bow, while Ab had the arrows in another tree.

They had left their other weapons in the cave.

At the base of each tree sat a huge brown bear.

Ab and Lightfoot were safe enough now, but they knew the bears would not go away.

If Ab only had the bow! But he could not swing to Lightfoot's tree.

There was too great a space between.

All day they talked to each other from tree to tree, and the big cave bears sat and waited.

Darkness at last came on, and Ab and Lightfoot were hungry and tired.

Still the bears sat and waited.

Ab could see the glare of their small, hungry eyes in the dark.

So the brave pair made ready to sleep in the trees.

Each plaited a rope of twigs, and with it they tied themselves to a limb and went to sleep.

All night they slept.

When Ab awoke he wondered where he was, but he quickly remembered.

He looked anxiously across to see if his dear Lightfoot was still there, and there she was.

Then he looked down.

There sat those same hungry cave bears.

He called aloud to Lightfoot.

She awoke frightened.

She would have fallen if she had not been bound to the tree.

Ab was raging mad to think he had no weapon.

“Oh for a spear or a stone ax!” said he.
At last he thought of a plan.

“Lightfoot,” he said, “you are a brave girl.

“You must do as I say, or we shall both starve here.

“Crawl out upon that branch above me, swing down from it, swing hard, and throw yourself over to me.

“I will catch you and hold you.

“I am strong.

“Hold fast to the bow when you jump.”

It was a fearful jump, and both knew that if they failed, they would soon be in the jaws of the big cave bears.

But they also knew it was their only chance.

Poor Lightfoot was afraid, but when she saw her brave Ab holding out his giant arms, she made ready.

Ab locked his strong legs around the limb.

Lightfoot walked out on the limb of her tree and looked over and down.

It looked so far.

But she quickly lowered herself beneath the limb.

Back and forth she swung, farther and farther each time.

With a cry she threw herself downward through the air.

The cave bears saw her leap and growled for their breakfast.

But right into Ab's strong arms she went.

He caught her, but could he hold on with his legs?

The limb was bending far down.

It was cracking!

Ah! but it swung back and they were safe.



"WITH A CRY SHE THREW HERSELF DOWNWARD"

The hungry bears gave an angry growl.
Ab shouted for joy.

He shook his fist at the brutes below.

He reached toward Lightfoot for the bow which hung about her shoulders.

“Follow me,” said Ab, and they climbed down to the lowest limb.

The red-eyed bears reared up, eager for something good to eat.

They thought Ab and Lightfoot would make a fine breakfast.

Ab took his best and strongest arrow.

He fitted it to the string.

Then he put one foot down and waved it to tease the angry beasts.

They roared aloud and tore the bark with their big claws.

Ab drew back the arrow as far as he could bend the strong bow.

Twang! and the biggest bear fell back upon the ground, shot through the neck.

He got up blind and dizzy.

With a howl of pain he crawled away toward Ab's cave to find a place to die.

Again Ab chose his best arrow.

He drew back with all his might, took aim at the other bear and shot.

The arrow only buried itself in the great brute's shoulder.

The beast was badly hurt, and her awful roaring echoed through the forest.

Still she raged about the tree.

Again and again Ab shot his best arrows.

Each time the arrow drove deeply into the fierce beast, but she was as strong as ever. She fairly bristled with arrows, but still she lived.

Ab knew that the bear would die, but they would have to wait awhile.

"What a wonderful weapon your bow and arrow is!" said Lightfoot.

"See what it has done for us to-day."

CHAPTER XXI

AB AND LIGHTFOOT SAVED BY FIRE

The bear kept tearing off the bark of the tree in its rage.

She gnawed and split off great slivers.

“I am glad the trunk is thick”, said Lightfoot.

After a time the bear began to grow weaker.

Her roars changed into growls as she staggered about.

At last she started blindly for the forest to die.

Before she had gone far, she grew dizzy and fell over heavily. She was dead.

As the bear toppled over Ab gave a whoop and slid lightly to the ground.

Lightfoot followed him.

It was very good to be upon the ground again.

Ab stamped with his feet, and Lightfoot danced upon the grass in glee.

But this was only for a moment, for Ab knew that other beasts were lurking about in search of food.

It was only the growls of the huge cave bears, that kept the other animals away.

Now, since the bear had ceased roaring, other beasts would soon be upon them.

So Ab started for the cave.

As he reached its entrance, he gave a strange cry. Lightfoot ran to his side.

They saw the doorway of the cave blocked up tightly by the huge body of the bear.

He had tried to crawl into a dark place to die and had got fast in the doorway of the cave.

He had wedged himself in so tightly that his dead body filled the rocky entrance.

Ab and Lightfoot were badly frightened, because they could not pull the big beast out, nor was there room to get by him.

Homeless with all their arrows gone!

Hungry, too!

They had not tasted food for many hours.

Just then they heard a sharp, snapping growl at the edge of the forest.

Lurking hyenas had found the she-bear.

From another direction came the howl of wolves that scented food.

What should they do?

There was no time to waste.

They could not get into the cave, nor could they get back among the trees.

Ab seized a stout limb for a club.

Turning to Lightfoot who shook with fear, he said only the word "Fire."

She understood that she must start a fire, while Ab kept guard with only a club.

Nobody in all the country could start a fire more swiftly than she.

She had no matches—no flint and steel—no coals.

How then could poor Lightfoot make a fire? She knew how.

Her quick eye saw two small pieces of wood.

One was flat and very dry and crumbly.

It would take fire quickly if it were made very hot.

The other stick was pointed and very hard.

Lightfoot sat down upon the ground.

She took the pointed hard stick and began twirling it very, very fast upon the flat crumbly wood.

So fast was the twirling that you could scarcely see the whirling stick.

Meantime Ab with ready club in hand, crept near where the she-bear lay.

He stopped when he came near enough to see what was happening.

Four great hyenas were tearing hungrily at the flesh of the dead brute.

Behind them deep in the wood, Ab saw the shining eyes of the wolf pack.

He knew that when the bear was eaten, the hyenas would come for him and Lightfoot.

So he crept back to find Lightfoot still madly twirling the hard stick upon the soft crumbly wood.

“It is very hot now”, said Lightfoot.
“Twirl as fast as you can”, said Ab, “We must have fire soon, or be eaten alive.”

Just then a tiny thread of smoke arose from the soft, hot wood.

Ab ran to Lightfoot with dry crumbs of wood.

He sprinkled them over the hot, smoking stick, and a little flame of fire burst out.

“We are saved!” cried Ab.

Dry twigs were quickly piled upon the flame.

“We must make a wall of fire around our cave.” said Ab.

Oh, how quickly he and Lightfoot touched fire to the fallen pine tree in many places!

They pulled dead branches from it and piled them at the ends of the fallen tree.

The wall was made.

Just then they heard the terrible sound of wolves fighting with the hyenas.

The wolves were battling for the bear meat.

The ring of fire would keep off all beasts for a time, and Ab and Lightfoot

breathed easier, but they were weak with hunger.

“There is meat,” said Ab, pointing to the big bear in the cave door, “and there is fire. We will eat.”

He put his hand to his belt for his sharp flint knife, but it was not there.

It had been lost in the tree climbing.

He found only a flint scraper.

It was a very poor knife, but Ab must make it do.

With it his strong arms tore away the tough skin of the bear. Then strip after strip of flesh, he scraped and pulled away.

He tossed them to poor, hungry Light-foot.

She did not wait to cook it because she was nearly starved.

Soon she felt stronger.

She told Ab to feed the fire while she cut meat for him.

He ate as she had done.

A tiny rill of cold water trickled down over the rocks near the cave door.

From this they quenched their thirst and then ate more and more.

Darkness came on, and they slept and fed the fire by turns.

They could hear growls and snarling sounds in the forest all night.

There were hungry things out there that wanted to eat a man and woman, but they feared the fire.

Morning came, and the sounds from the forest died away partly, but Ab knew the fierce animals were still there.

Day after day they dug away at the meat from the huge bear.

But the ring of fire was always kept burning brightly.

On the sixth day the passage was open so they could enter their home again.

How delighted they were and how tired of bear meat!

Ab would not soon leave the cave again without every weapon he might need.

That night poor Lightfoot had horrible dreams.

She dreamed that she was again flying through the air toward Ab, but that she had missed him and was falling into the mouths of those awful bears.

Then she screamed terribly and Ab awoke frightened.

He quieted his brave little wife.

Now she slept again and again she dreamed, but this time it was a good dream.

She saw the fire god driving away all the wild beasts, while Ab and Old Mok were turning a whole forest into the finest bows and arrows.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FIRE COUNTRY

The sun rose bright next morning; and when Ab rolled the big stone away and came out past the fire, everything looked beautiful.

Not a trace was left of the big bear.

Even its bones had been dragged into the forest by the hungry beasts.

“The animals are gone. We are safe, now”, said Lightfoot.

“Just for a while”, said Ab.

“Do you not hear the rustling in the forest?”

“We need to be very watchful when we leave our cave.

“We must never be careless here again.”

Ab and Lightfoot lived happily in the cave for many months.

The forest was full of game, and so meat was plentiful.

Ab had many chances to use his weapon.

He taught Lightfoot how to shoot with the bow and arrow.

She soon became a fine shot.

She could not send an arrow so far as Ab, but she could hit a smaller mark.

So she was the better bird hunter.

She brought down grouse and other birds, which made delicious eating.

Lightfoot was a rare climber when some bird's nest was found far out on a branch.

Roasted bird's eggs made fine food.

She knew where to find nuts, and along the river's bank she dug clams out of the mud with her toes.

Ab never had so many good things to eat before.

He taught her how to chip flint to make spearheads and arrow points.

She could soon make finer ones than he could.

Sometimes Old Mok would be rowed up the river by Bark, who was now a sturdy lad.

Old Mok and Lightfoot became great friends.

He taught her how to make the best arrow points and how to set traps.

Before long Lightfoot knew ever so much more about arrows than Ab.

But Ab was very glad, for he needed the best arrows that could be made to keep off wolf packs and cave bears and hyenas.

Those daring animals crept up to their cave home every night.

How many blazing eyes they saw as Ab and Lightfoot peeked out between the heaped rocks at the mouth of their cave!

What low growls and angry snarls they listened to each night!

Even when all was quiet in the darkness, soft padded feet told them they were in the forest where the fiercest beasts lived.

Ab was afraid that some day both he and Lightfoot would be killed in this dangerous region.

One day Ab wandered far from home and did not know where he was.

Darkness came upon him when he was far out on a treeless plain.

A pack of hungry wolves chased him many miles.

His arrows were all used.

There was no tree to be seen.

The howling pack was close upon him.

At last he saw a light and ran toward it as fast as his tired legs could carry him.

It was a great wall of fire and he ran straight to it.

Just as the hungry wolves were about to snatch his heels, he leaped high through the flames. The wolves did not follow.

They ran up and down the line of fire raging for their prey.

Ab looked about and saw he was safe, though he was slightly burned as he dashed over the yellow flames.

He shouted and laughed and threw stones through the fire at the snarling wolves.

A few minutes later, tired Ab lay asleep near the flames.

When he awoke he found himself surrounded by a wall of fire on one side and by a great steep cliff on the other.

Where was he?

At last he remembered the Fire Country of which Old Mok had told him.

The wall of fire was blazing up along a great crack in the earth.



"HE LEAPED HIGH THROUGH THE FLAMES"

From it came a sheet of gas, which was always burning.

But Ab was hungry, and he saw no way to escape from this Fire Country.

He ran up and down the valley and all around the long wall of fire and the cliff.

At last he found a place where the cliff was not quite so steep.

He clambered up into the forest above and soon found nuts for food.

From what Old Mok had told him many years before, Ab knew how to find his cave home.

He found Lightfoot safe there, but she feared that her brave Ab had been eaten by the beasts.

She screamed for joy as she saw him coming home.

Ab was glad, too, for he threw his arms about Lightfoot and kissed her.

She told Ab she had stayed close at home.

When the beasts came sniffing about the cave at night, she shot arrows out at them.

Sometimes she hit them, and they howled with pain.

“It is dreadful,” said Lightfoot, “to have a home among the wild beasts.

“Every day when you are late, I fear a bear or tiger has eaten you.

“Let us go somewhere else to live.”

“All right,” said Ab, “we will make our home in the Fire Valley.”

Then he told her about the Fire Country and how safe and happy they might be there.

“Are there any caves?” asked Lightfoot.

“No,” said Ab, “but there is an opening under a great cliff.

“We can make it do for a cave, but we can be warm and safe without one.

“We shall not need a cave in the Fire Country,” said Ab.

“Our children can play outside and be safe.

“We shall not need to carry weapons even, for no wild beasts can get into the Fire Valley.

“It will be easy to start our fires, too, for that wall of fire is always burning day and night.

“Perhaps we can learn to catch fish from the river as the shell people do,” said Ab.

And Lightfoot was glad to go.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AB'S NEW HOME.

Ab and Lightfoot were safe and happy in the Fire Valley. Ab quickly dug his cave in the soft rock cliff.

Soon Old Mok, who loved Ab as a son, came to live in the Fire Valley.

So a cave was dug for him where he could chip his arrows and spearheads and be happy. There was room for many cave families here.

Soon One-Ear and his whole family of six sons and four daughters came.

Then old Hilltop also moved his family of twelve big sons and daughters.

After a time there were many caves in the cliff, dug out as Ab had done.

One warm summer a flood came, and the water got into Ab's cave.

So he propped some long poles against the rock outside and covered them with bark.

This was a good shelter from rain and from the sun, too.

They liked their new house.

It was cool and airy.

Ab said, "I'll never sleep in a dark cave again."

Other cave families built houses like Ab's.

Old Mok shook his head and asked Ab what he would do when cold winter came.

"I'll make my house warm by more bark and skins", said Ab.

"I'll never leave my warm cave for an old shack like yours", said Mok.

And he never did.

He said he could not sleep in such a light place.

But all the young men built homes like Ab's and never went back to the caves.

“I should not like to go back to the old forest again to live”, said Ab one day.

“How plentiful the fowl are in this forest!

“We can shoot them so easily here.

“And we are all so safe behind the wall of fire.”

“And we could never get such nuts there as we get here”, said the children.

For Ab and Lightfoot had three sturdy little boys in their home now.

“And, Oh the sweet honey!” said Lightfoot, who was the best honey gatherer because she could climb so well.

With Old Mok's fine arrows and bows, Ab and old Hilltop did many daring things.

They made it so unpleasant for even the fiercest animals that they went farther off to live.

Even Sabre-Tooth, the tiger, was glad to find a home far away from the brave hunters.

His roar was not often heard any more.

One day Ab went into Old Mok's cave, grumbling.

“I shot an arrow into a great deer”, he said, “and I was close and shot hard, but the beast ran before he fell.

“So we had to carry the meat a long way.

“I tore the arrow from him and saw that it had not gone half way in.

“I think it was because the arrow-head had ragged edges.

“How can a man drive deeply an arrow with such rough edges?

“Are you getting too old to make good arrows, Mok?”

The crippled old arrow-maker fumed a little.

But he said to himself, "Ab certainly must have good arrows!

"How can I make them better?"

The next day Old Mok sat on the river bank looking at some smooth stones in the water.

"These stones must grind each other smooth", thought Mok.

"I'll try to grind the arrow-heads smooth."

So he took from the water a piece of sandstone.

With this he began rubbing an arrow-head.

It was very slow work, but Old Mok kept at it, and the chipped flint was getting a little smoother.

For two long days Old Mok worked hard.

Then he gave to Ab an arrow whose edges were wonderfully smooth and sharp.

“Try my new ground arrow”, said Mok.
How delighted Ab was!

He seized the arrow and drew it back
in his big bow.

Then he took aim at an oak tree and
shot.

The arrow buried itself far in the hard
oak, and the woods rang with the joyful
shouts of the cave men.

“With a ground arrow like that I be-
lieve I could kill even the tough-skinned
rhinoceros,” said Ab; “it is the finest
weapon in the world.”

All the hunters gathered about Old Mok.

Everybody now wanted smooth arrow-
heads, and Mok could not finish enough.

The cave men ground all their stone
weapons smooth after this.

CHAPTER XXIV

SABRE-TOOTH AMONG THE SHELL PEOPLE

One day at noon a runner burst panting into the Fire valley.

The flesh was torn from his cheek and one arm, and he staggered from his hurt and his long run.

The cave men ran to him and asked what the trouble was, but he only called out "Ab! Ab!" and pitched forward on the ground.

Ab came quickly, and the runner could only gasp, "Big Tiger!"

But everybody knew what he meant, and they ran to the gateway of the valley and raised a wall of stone.

Then when the runner's mind came back, he told his story.

He said, "Our shell people were making merry after a day of good fishing, when just at dusk there was a terrible roar.

"A powerful cave tiger leaped among us, seized a man and bounded away in the darkness.

"The poor man yelled and shrieked pitifully, but we could not save him.

"We seized our weapons and started after the monster.

"All night long we bravely searched the dark forest.

"At daybreak we found what was left of the poor man in a pathway in the forest.

"From a clump of bushes close by came a fierce growl.

"The tiger sprang out and our men fled.

"I alone stood my ground," said the brave runner.

“The tiger’s paw struck me on the face as I dodged behind a tree and ran.

“Sabre-Tooth was not hungry, and so he did not follow me.”

Everybody shuddered at the name of Sabre-Tooth.

But Ab said, “We will help you.

“This monster must be slain.”

Soon a dozen stalwart cave men, with bows and spears, set out for the country of the shell men.

They saw not a single animal in all the forest, as they went.

Every beast, but the rhinoceros and mammoth, fled from Sabre-Tooth as from fire.

At mid-day Ab and his men reached the shell men’s village, and this was what they heard.

“The tiger has come again !

“He swept among us again this morn-

ing, and with a terrible roar he snatched our finest woman and bounded away!"

The shell men were too frightened to follow the awful beast this time.

How glad they were to see Ab!

They thought he might kill Sabre-Tooth with his big bow and arrow.

Ab found more people in the village than he had ever seen there before.

They had sent a messenger to the Eastern cave people also, and a score of mighty hunters had come under their leader, Boarface.

Now Boarface was jealous of Ab's great name because of the bow and arrow.

So he was cold toward Ab, but he was willing to join Ab's men and help kill Sabre-Tooth.

The shell men and the cave men held a council to decide upon a plan.

Every man took his best weapons and

formed a line of bristling spears and started for the forest.

Upon the forest path they found a part of the woman's body, but no beast was to be seen.

"The tiger must be sleeping," they said.

The hunters talked over plans.

They decided it was safer to trap the beast than to fight him in the open.

But who could think of a trap that would hold Sabre-Tooth?

How could they get him into a trap anyway?

At last Ab said, "I think I can trap Sabre-Tooth, if you will all help."

"We will all help," shouted the brave hunters.

"Then," said Ab, "do as I bid you."

CHAPTER XXV

SABRE-TOOTH SLAIN

Ab and his men had brought what they might need to kill Sabre-Tooth.

They had two great, tough hides of the urus and strips of thick rhinoceros hide.

They also had a great spear shaft fifteen feet long, and as thick as a man's arm.

Its head was a blade of the hardest flint, but this huge spear was too heavy for a man to hurl.

“What can such a monster weapon be for?” said the men as they watched Ab climb a tree and crawl out on a big limb.

He took a pebble and dropped it and watched where it hit the ground.

“Bring what is left of the poor woman's

body to this place under this limb", said Ab. "Place it right where the pebble hit the ground".

Just then came a fearful roar.

The tiger was very near, and his keen nose had scented the men.

Everybody fled for his life but Ab and old Hilltop and Boarface, and a few others.

There was swift work to be done, for Sabre-Tooth might come at any moment.

They quickly put the body over the pebble.

Ab shouted to old Hilltop, "Bring me the big spear and the urus hides!"

Hilltop was up the tree in a flash.

"Now tie the urus hides to the spear shaft just below the middle.

"Help me tie the spear to this limb with these tough thongs.

"Boarface, bring stones to fill the bags of urus hides," shouted Ab.

Boarface and his few helpers scurried about and carried loads of stones up to Ab as fast as they could.

“Be quick or we will be caught in this tree,” said Ab.

Now the great spear hung downward, with two big bags of stone tied to it.

Suddenly there came from the forest another roar!

Nearer and nearer came the terrible Sabre-Tooth!

All the men fled but Ab and Hilltop and Boarface.

“One man can do the rest,” said Ab and he forced them to go, too.

There sat Ab all alone on the big limb with his sharp flint knife ready to cut the thongs that held the huge spear.

The great beast with fearful claws and padded feet was coming back to dine on what he had left in the morning.

Along the path came the tiger, and Ab gripped the limb firmly.

The beast was so huge and so terrible to look upon!

His great head moved slowly from side to side.

His eyes blazed up and down the path, as the monster cat came creeping toward the body.

He came into the sunlight; and the big, rich stripes shone beautifully.

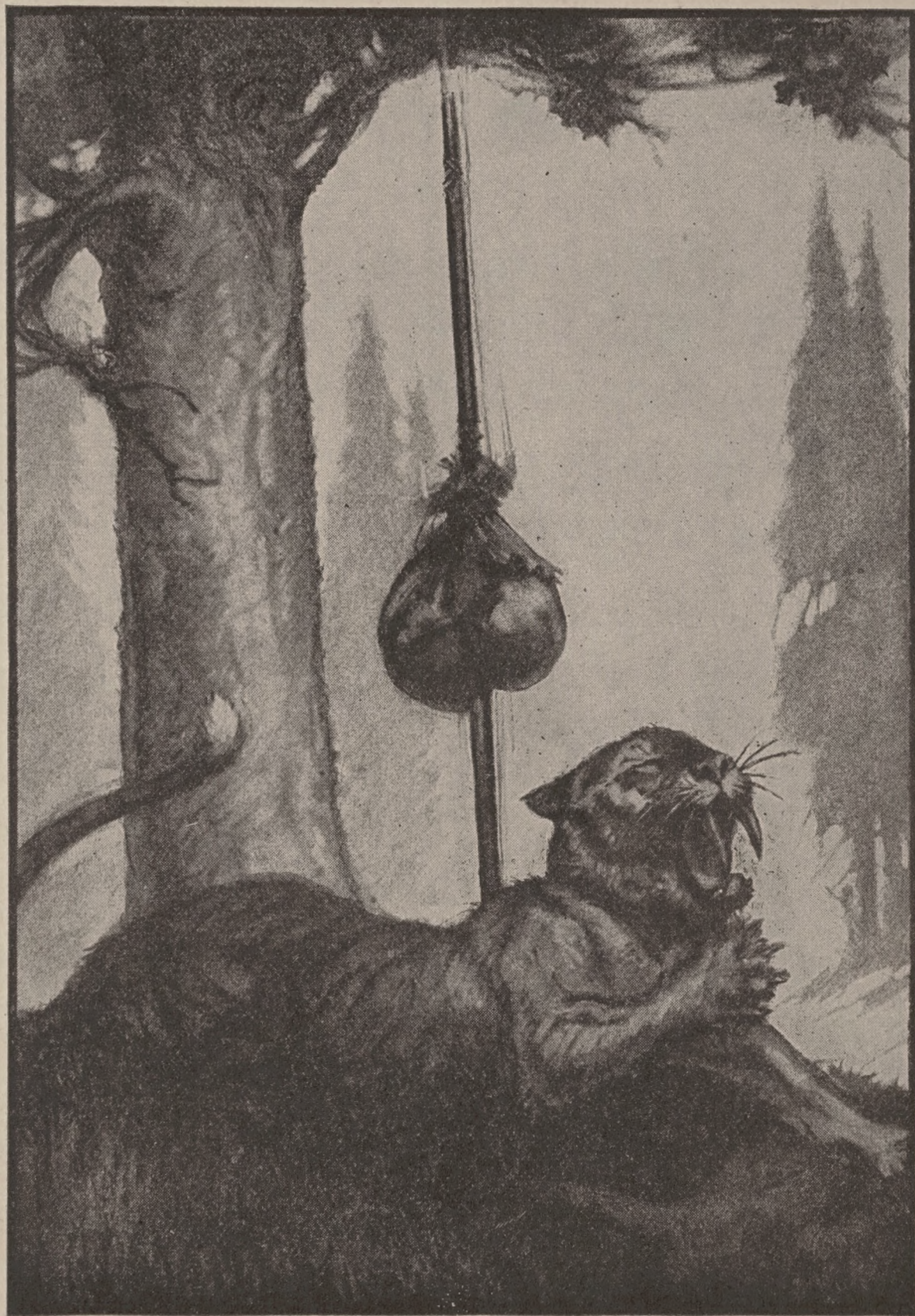
He was as splended as he was dreadful.

The beast squatted down to his dinner right below Ab and the big spear.

Ab pressed his sharp flint knife back and forth noiselessly upon the tight raw-hide.

Suddenly the thong was cut, and the heavy-weighted spear fell like lightning.

The flint head struck Sabre-Tooth squarely between the shoulders



"THE HEAVY-WEIGHTED SPEAR FELL LIKE LIGHTNING
AND PINNED SABRE-TOOTH TO THE GROUND"

It passed right through the monster beast and pinned him to the ground.

Such fearful roaring there was!

How glad the hunters were as they heard it echoing through the forest.

They hurried back, and there lay the great tiger still, and Ab was stripping from the huge body the glorious robe it wore. And then such joyful shouting you never heard!

The shell men were wild with joy.

They shouted, clapped their hands and rolled on the ground.

“Who killed Sabre-Tooth?” cried one; and a hundred men shouted, “Ab! Ab! Ab!”

Ab called upon old Hilltop to help him, and soon the wonderful skin of the tiger was stretched out upon the ground.

“I will have half of it,” declared Boar-face, as he shook his fist at Ab.

“It shall not be cut,” replied Ab fiercely.

“It is mine. I killed the tiger.”

“I helped,” said Boarface.

“So did we,” said Old Hilltop, “but Ab planned it.”

Both sides seized their stone axes, and there was almost a deadly battle over Sabre-Tooth’s beautiful coat.

But it was at last given to Ab, and Boarface and his men went home very angry.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CAVE MEN CHOOSE A CHIEF

When Boarface and the Eastern cave men heard what snug homes were in the Fire Valley they said, "Let us drive out One-Ear and old Hilltop and their people, and Ab, too.

"He robbed us of Sabre-Tooth's coat."

So Boarface gathered his warriors together.

He wanted to surprise old Hilltop and Ab, but a friendly shell man ran to the Fire Valley with the news.

Old Hilltop quickly called all the men of his village to meet in his cave.

Here came the mighty hunters, each with his best weapons.

They crowded into the cave with much noise.

Old Hilltop bade them sit down on the cave floor.

Then he told them that Boarface was coming with his warriors to drive them from their homes.

“Cave men,” said he, “what shall we do?”

“Shall we yield like women or shall we fight?”

Then such yelling you never heard!

“Let us fight!” they cried.

“Let Boarface come on!”

After awhile the noise quieted, and One-Ear stood up and spoke.

“Men of the Fire Valley,” he said, “We are few in number, while Boarface has many warriors.

“If we mean to fight we must choose a chief and we must obey him.

“We can’t beat Boarface without a chief.

“When we form a line to hunt each man wants to be head of the line; and while we dispute, the animals all get away.

“If we do that way when Boarface comes, we will all be dead men.

“Let us choose a chief who is wise and strong and brave, and then obey him.”

Then Ab arose.

“Father One-Ear is right and what he spoke is true,” said Ab.

“Now old Hilltop is a brave and famous hunter.

“He led us in the mammoth hunt, and that was a glorious day.

“He has fought alone with the fiercest of beasts. “He helped kill Sabre-Tooth while others ran away.

“Surely,” said Ab, “we will all be glad to obey and follow him as our leader.

“Let us then make old Hilltop chief, and we will hold our valley against Boar-face as long as the stars shine.”

Many cave men cheered these words of Ab.

Then arose Old Mok, crippled and bent.

“Cave men,” said he. “I am not a great fighter as you know, but I think I know who ought to be our chief.

“We need a younger man than old Hilltop.

“We ought to choose the greatest of all cave men.

“Who made the biggest kettle in all the world?”

Everybody cried, “Ab!”

“Who invented the greatest weapon that cave men ever saw?”

And everybody shouted “Ab! Ab!”

“Who was brave enough to live on that

rocky point among the cave bear and Sabre-Tooth?

“Ab! Ab! Ab!” said all the cave men.

“Who pinned Sabre-Tooth to the ground with the big spear?”

And again they waved their arms, clapped their hands and shouted, Ab! Ab! Ab!”

“Then,” said Old Mok, “Ab must be our chief.”

CHAPTER XXVII

AB AND BOARFACE IN BATTLE

Ab told the Fire clan to get ready for battle.

They were glad to obey their brave chief, and each man was soon sorting arrows and tightening bows.

Old Hilltop looked carefully over his big spears.

He would never give up his spears for the bow and arrow.

One-Ear looked over his big stone ax.

Old Mok went into his cave and stayed there.

What he was working at, no one knew.

The Fire clan was not large, but it had a score of mighty warriors.

Ab was a wise and brave chief, but Boarface had two men to his one.

Still Ab's men were helped by the wall of fire.

Then there was the bow and arrow, with which Lightfoot could shoot so well.

If Boarface and his men would only stand off, Ab's warriors could soon shoot them down with arrows; but everybody knew that Boarface would rush right up close to fight with spears and stone axes.

So Ab told his men to shoot with the bows until Boarface came close, and then to grab their spears and axes.

There was a high shelf of rock near the gateway.

On this high rock Lightfoot stood with a bundle of arrows.

Hilltop and Chief Ab and a dozen brave followers stood on the stone wall with

bows and arrows in hand and with spears and axes close by.

As Boarface's men came rushing up to the wall, Lightfoot's arrows sang through the air.

Each arrow struck down one of Boarface's big fighters, and he never got up again.

As Boarface saw his men fall, he cursed the arrows of Ab.

But he could spare some men, for he had so many.

His warriors climbed up the wall only to be beaten back by the great blows of Ab and Hilltop.

Sometimes two brave men of Boarface would jump at Ab together with their huge stone axes.

But every time one of Lightfoot's swift arrows struck down one, while Ab's strong arm killed the other.

Boarface and Ab were seeking each other, and at last they came together.

These giants drew back their huge stone axes and struck what might have been a death blow for both.

But the axes came together with a crash, and the handle of Ab's ax was broken.

A moment more and Boarface would surely have killed Ab.

But Lightfoot's sharp eyes saw the fight, and her well-aimed arrow laid Boarface dead upon the wall the next instant.

Ab's men gave a great shout as Boarface fell. The fighting went on.

The last arrows were shot, when Old Mok came from his cave tugging a great armful.

The air buzzed again with arrows.

But no one could take Boarface's place as leader, and so his men fled.

Ab led his men in close pursuit.

They drove what was left of Boarface's warriors, into a cave and blocked it up.

They were going to starve them.

"Why not let them live and work for us?" said Old Mok.

"That is better," said Ab, "we will make them our slaves."

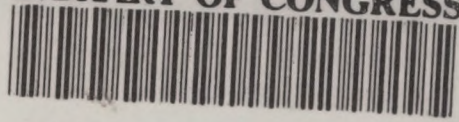
And now there was peace in the Fire Valley.

For many long years Ab's clan lived and prospered there.

The Fire clan had many great chiefs, but they never had another so great as Ab.

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